



*Imperial
England*

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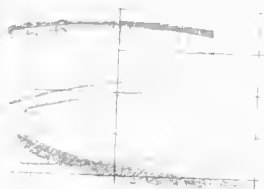


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IMPERIAL ENGLAND.

BY

MONTAGU BURROWS, R.N., M.A.,

CHICHELE PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.



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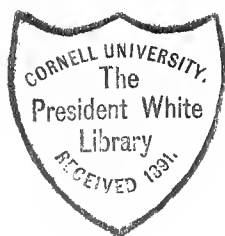
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P R E F A C E.

A CONVICTION that the strange and novel sort of utterances which are heard on every side about the "British Empire" are in some degree attributable to the absence of any available summary account of its growth and defence, has produced the following brief attempt to deal with the subject.

It surely ought not to be relegated to the sphere of what is commonly called "politics." It is a matter for the whole, not for a part of the nation. To no class of politicians can the history of the present phenomena be a matter of indifference. Amongst the inhabitants of Great Britain to identify "Imperialism" with a party is an abuse of language. Parties may differ as to the weight which ought to be attached to particular considerations at a particular moment; as to questions of peace or war when they arise; or as to the comparative importance of domestic or foreign affairs. But they cannot differ as to the fact that the

existing state of affairs has grown out of a long, complicated, most interesting past; and they are supremely concerned in having a true view of that past put before them.

What are politics but an adaptation of the existing circumstances of a State to existing requirements? And how can we gain a right understanding of those circumstances or requirements without a precise, or at least compendious, knowledge of their origin, of their relation to the history of other States, and of their place in the progress of the human species?

So much being premised, the only necessary condition for useful reflection on the past is that the historical sketch should be fair and true; that is, that it should not neglect to notice the changes of opinion which have taken place on the subject-matter, that it should rise above mere party watchwords, and, however briefly they may be treated, should give their due proportion to events. In even such a summary as the present it is hoped that the above characteristics may be discovered.

It might, perhaps, be objected to this claim for impartiality that the two Papers which are appended to the main treatise are extracts from

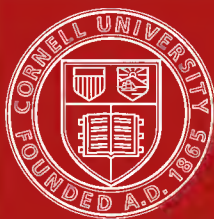
Articles which have already appeared in the *Quarterly Review*. The writer may at least be allowed to express a hope that nothing will be found in either of them which a Whig might not receive as well as a Tory. One of them was written fully nine years ago, and only slightly altered for publication in 1877.

The writer would take this opportunity to thank the proprietor of the *Quarterly* for his kindness in allowing the Articles to be reprinted.

M. B.

OXFORD,

January 22nd, 1880.



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IMPERIAL ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

It may not be obvious to every one that half the difficulties felt by the inhabitants of the British Isles in measuring their responsibilities as members of an Empire, arise from want of reflection upon the manner in which it came into their hands. They are born and bred islanders; the Empire seems an anomaly. They may be proud of it, ashamed of it. They may even resent the use of the very word, forgetting that it was common enough even in the last century,* and in this century has become an absolutely necessary expression for the widely separated masses of population, in every stage of social and political development, which own the gentle sway of the British Sovereign. When Governments extend from the centre in this or even a far less marked manner, it has always seemed necessary to look for a designation which expressed something more than the title of the original king or ruler. Amongst the fami-

* The proof of its common acceptance is to be found in its casual appearance in standard books, in public despatches, and in private journals; such as in "Junius' Letters," Burke's Works, Lord Sandwich's letters in "Rodney's Life," "Lord Malmebury's Diaries," &c., &c.

lies of the European stock, the name derived from the Roman "*Imperium*" suggests itself as a matter of course.

But, if the existence of their Empire seems a rather strange and unaccountable thing, even to many Englishmen, Scotchmen, or Irishmen, what must it appear to one who has not been born to the inheritance? Perhaps, the best way of realising that there is a difficulty, a difficulty of which we may be unconscious, though all the while displaying the effect of its existence, is to try to imagine ourselves in the place of some person intelligent enough to observe facts, but happening for some reason to be unacquainted with the history of Great Britain. How hard would a mere looker-on at the present state of things find it to account for the existence of an Empire of such an unrivalled variety, extent, and influence, giving to the British a leading place in the select circle of world-governing Powers, and yet all radiating from a narrow insular space at a remote corner of Europe! Then we may imagine such a person still further perplexed by the comparison of that position with the present condition of other communities which have had, to all appearance, equal or nearly equal natural advantages, such as the Scandinavian kingdoms or the Low Countries. It would be by no means sufficient either for us or for him, if we were to point out that the facts which met his eye were simply due to the superior courage and enterprise of the British people, or to their peculiar insular position, and absurd to ascribe it to accident.

Nor would it be of much use to state generally

that the phenomena were the product of differences between the past relationship of England to the Continent and that of other States; for every country has had a history of its own. But in this direction would in fact lie the answer to the question. We should have to ask the enquirer to go with us into a careful survey of English history. It would not be enough to begin with the Modern Empire, or with its defence and growth during the interval which has elapsed since it was founded. We should at least be obliged to preface the account of these later portions of history with a sketch of the earlier times, and our sketch would necessarily comprise the following heads.

In the first place, we should have to point out the singularly mixed character of the people of England, the welding together of Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon, and Danish elements which they so happily represented, each bringing its own social and political contribution to the common dower. We should have to observe the significance of the very early conversion of the people to Christianity; to distinguish the peculiar interweaving of ecclesiastical and political training in the formation of the early English Constitution, and how it brought about, working on a kindly soil, the conspicuous superiority of the people of England to all others in domestic civilization, in the character of the English home, the true basis of every great development. We should thus suggest some explanation of the extraordinary felicity of this people, considering the times, in working out

the problem of problems, how to unite individual freedom with general order; and show how, long before the Norman Conquest, there was a promise of this people becoming great. Yet something was wanting.

In sketching the history of the Norman Conquest we should see how that something wanted was supplied. We should have to dwell upon the circumstance that England was conquered by no common men, but by a princely race who had proved themselves the leaders of the Continental families, and seemed fashioned for the express purpose of impregnating more phlegmatic communities with their own ambitious, enterprising character, already sparkling with not a few of the gems which glistened on the coat of a later chivalry. We should above all mark how they brought with them those claims to Continental territory which have ever since coloured the whole of English history. We should show how, from the moment that Harold was struck down at Senlac, Teutonic England became a great Continental Power, great not from any doubtful claim to Continental territory, but as a matter of fact; great in comparison with the infant States shaping themselves all around; great in consequence of those marriages and alliances which, growing out of the Norman Conquest, made the Plantagenet Kings of England more than a match for the slowly-consolidating French nation; great from the two, at least partial, conquests of France which those kings effected in pursuit of their claims, during the Hundred Years War. We should have to show how all this led to the

rank taken by the insular State in the Fifteenth Century as one of the five governing Powers of Europe, and to a very large proportion of those traditions, and of that training, which nursed within these islands the sense of its people having been marked out for an imperial race.

From this great mediæval position we should have to explain that internal disputes dethroned England for a time; while at the very same period, happily for France, her own growing nationality received such an impulse by the absorption of semi-independent provinces that the question of English rule over its old Continental possessions was settled for ever. But we should also have to point out that, even when the English wounds were scarcely yet healed, the one master principle of French policy was contained in the maxim that any sacrifice was to be made, any sum of money paid down on the spot, to buy off an Edward the Fourth or a Henry the Seventh, rather than allow the old enemy once more to obtain a footing in France. With the advent of the Tudors we should have to show how the system of balancing the European States, all of them by this time consolidated, commenced and flourished,—pretentiously under Henry the Eighth, really and beneficially under Elizabeth; and how, under the direction of the great Queen, the might of Philip of Spain was overthrown, and the Reformed Churches of Europe were saved from extinction. Under her long and happy reign we should observe the fame of England raised to the highest

pitch it had yet attained, and based on a foundation of domestic policy so securely laid as to have remained substantially unchanged since her day.

During the century of the four unfortunate Stuarts we should trace a second retreat of Great Britain from Continental affairs, but yet also, mainly through their very errors, a great expansion of Colonial enterprise, bringing with it a considerable development of British commerce; and even, during the brief interval of the Commonwealth, an assertion of the old Elizabethan position with the old English spirit. But we could hardly fail to point out how the refusal or inability of the Stuarts to take up their proper place in Europe brought about its punishment; and we should turn with a feeling of relief to the reaction which set in with the Revolution of 1688. Under William and Anne, under Marlborough, Godolphin, and Somers, we should once more find these little islands laying down the law for Europe, and banding its component parts together for the overthrow of the French tyrant who, like another Philip of Spain, was bestriding the world, but, like Philip, had to bend at last to the indignant combination of the oppressed.

We should then have to describe another, and the last, period, which might be compared with those of the Wars of the Roses and of the four Stuarts, when a disputed Succession once more withdrew the English from effective interference in the affairs of the Continent, and encouraged their enemies to believe that

they had this time retreated from their ancient position once for all. Happily, as it was the last, so it was the shortest of the three periods; as it was distinguished by better government at home than those other periods, so it formed the basis of a better state of things abroad. We pass a few years of painful depression under the aggressive policy of France and Spain, of insults and failures, which, however, did their appointed work; and we wake up to a glorious spectacle—the emergence of Great Britain out of a sea of difficulties, and the aggressive policy of her neighbours ending, not in the collapse of the Power which had so long confronted them, but in the establishment of the Modern British Empire.

Some part of what would be necessary in such a sketch will be found in the two Papers which follow the present one.

It would thus be made evident that the eminence attained by Great Britain in modern times, though the form of its development is but of yesterday, is of no mushroom growth. Its place had been preparing for ages. Its claim to respect is rather that of the ancient family whose credit may have occasionally and for a time, during a long descent, become obscured, but could never be seriously questioned—some great and well-known family, whose reputation has brightened and broadened at each successive interval. It has occupied a position requiring, not a policy of restless ambition and vaunting self-assertion, but rather heroic defence, patient persistency, judi-

cious action in emergencies, skill in perceiving the changes of affairs and seizing their full significance, fearlessness in assuming the lead devolving on the heir of such responsibilities, and, lastly, a certain moderation which might disarm the resentment invariably attending* on success.

That the Empire won by George the Second and Chatham has, on the whole, been preserved and extended on the above principles may not be susceptible of absolute proof. It will always remain a matter of opinion. But our ideas on the subject may certainly be cleared by a consideration of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain during the reign of George the Third. Has not the time arrived when historical criticism may be expected to come forth out of the hazy atmosphere of faction, and to confront without alarm opinions which may even in recent days have been called "received opinions," but which only claimed assent because all sides of the truth had not yet become visible? Has not the time arrived when, instead of measuring the distribution of praise and blame by the application of social and political tests which our own time has made familiar, we may attempt to transport ourselves back to the actual lives of our predecessors, to make allowance for circumstances which were so different from our own, and, keeping fast hold indeed of the eternal principles of truth and morality, observe how far those predecessors honestly used the light which each of them possessed?

CHAPTER II.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AT THE CLOSE OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR.

THE reign of George the Third has not only afforded a more fiercely-contested battle-ground of historical opinion than any other in our annals: it is also the longest, the most confused, the most vast in its issues, the most important of all British reigns. It was a period of great wars, great Treaties, great men; it had also one glorious interval of peace. In such a sketch as the present it will tend to clearness if we divide this long reign into a few distinct parts. When the survey is completed it will be time to gather up results. The conclusion of the Seven Years War may be taken for the first division (1760—1763); the twenty-one years which succeeded it, including the American War, for the second (1763—1784); Pitt's Peace Administration for the third (1784—1793); the French Revolution War for the fourth (1793—1802); and the Napoleonic War for the fifth (1802—1815). It will also be convenient to single out and call to the front the seven chief characteristic figures of the reign, the men to whom the shaping out of events for England was, humanly speaking, due; and to group the outlines

of the survey round each of them. They are the King himself, Lord Chatham, Burke, the younger Pitt, Lord Cornwallis, Canning, and the Duke of Wellington. If in this select catalogue the names of second-rate Ministers, or even of great party-leaders or heroes, are not mentioned, it is because, on a wide retrospect, they seem to be sufficiently represented by the King, or because, however distinguished, they failed to change the course adopted by the British nation, or, finally, because they were in reality only secondary agents in comparison with those above named.

And, first, concerning His Majesty King George the Third. The space which he occupies on the canvas is so far beyond that of any other person during a large part of the reign that it will be necessary to discuss his political position at some length in this place, reserving for a final chapter some notices of other disputed points regarding his life and character. And here let us observe the change which is already taking place in the popular estimate of this prince, or rather the gradual recurrence of opinion to the contemporary estimate. We seem to have passed through, and almost come to an end, of what may be called the Reform-Bill period of literature. The fresh burst of exuberant political sentiment which attended the hard-fought Constitutional contests of that time, coloured every species of British writing, and none more than the historical and biographical portion. Many generations of schoolboys have

grown to manhood under the fascinating teaching of Brougham, Macaulay, and the old Edinburgh Reviewers; of Thackeray, Dickens, and their host of followers. Few have even been aware how much the confident bitterness, conspicuous in the invectives of their teachers, was due to the sense those teachers could not but entertain of the divergence of their views from the opinions of the preceding age. The new light throws the old into obscurity. The often-repeated story grows to be uncontradicted commonplace. Scarcely any one supposed that the older views of the King and of his reign would ever again receive attention.

But signs of reaction are not wanting in various quarters; and amongst other changes the present generation is learning to read with other eyes the career of one of the best and ablest sovereigns—certainly, for a large portion of his life, the most popular—that this country has ever possessed.

It must be confessed that to be able to regard King George the Third from this point of view requires that we should still close our eyes and ears to small, and fix them on large things. We must cease to gloat over the passing caricatures and satires and nicknames of the time, the blemishes and infirmities which a nation of inveterate jokers dwelt upon somewhat more freely than perhaps it would have done, could it have foreseen how these gibes would be used by posterity. The rancour of party spirit, which never ran higher than in this reign, seized

with admirable cunning on all openings for ridicule, knowing full well its power in a free country. It is the highest compliment that could be paid the King that so much of it fell upon his shoulders. It may be proved to demonstration that a very large part of it was due to his persistent discountenance of vice. "Peter Pindar" and Gilray are now forgotten, but they left their sting; and its effects have by no means even yet passed away. We may be subject to the effects without in the least knowing the cause.

Perhaps, one chief reason for the better opinion beginning to be entertained of the old King is to be found in the fact that he has at last been allowed to speak for himself. The extracts taken from his letters to Lord North by Sir James Mackintosh were of some use, but they were far from satisfactory. It was all that we had till of late years. The recent publication of the whole series by Mr. Donne has been a great step in advance, and numerous other letters have been published in the *Lives of William Pitt*, *Lord Eldon*, *Lord Sidmouth*, the "*Buckingham Papers*," in Jesse's "*Life and Reign of George the Third*," and other works. We have thus materials for forming a judgment which earlier generations had not, and we are better able to understand what the contemporary generation knew perfectly well. We are at least bound, now that we have fuller information, to ascertain what were the grounds of the King's conduct, and what excuse there was for his mistakes. When we have thus

adjusted the balance, we cannot escape from the duty of weighing against what remains, the solid merits of his private and public character, the degree in which he really represented the nation, and the success which crowned the life-long efforts of as true a patriot as Alfred the Great, Edward the First, or Queen Elizabeth.

In the above Correspondence, and, it may be added, in the numerous private journals and memoirs of persons who had close access to the King, only published of late years, we trace a character rare indeed, and such as we might expect to produce great actions. These actions will speak for themselves ; but it may be remarked that it would indeed be strange, and contrary to all experience, if a life of such moral and religious excellence, if a mind of a type by no means inferior, as some would have us believe, if a youth and manhood passed in contact with consummate intellects, if the habits formed by a rigidly conscientious discharge of duty, if the experience of the greatest events which ever befel a kingdom, were to lead a sovereign into political courses which the verdict of posterity would condemn. This of itself ought to make us willing to reconsider unfavourable judgments. To do so is not a matter of sentiment. It is a duty.

But is the very influence exercised by the King on the course of affairs—a vast influence, as all acknowledge—is this influence itself an indictment against him ? His so-called “Personal Government”

is one of the stock charges still to be found in the works of a certain class of writers. It is a vague term. What does it mean? If the King only occupied the place assigned him by the Constitution, we cannot blame him. Was this so? A very few words on this point must suffice.

It will of course be admitted that the King did govern in a sense very different from that in which his two predecessors, or any of his successors governed. The former had been quite unable to take up the position of William the Third or of Anne; for the disputed Succession paralysed them, and the Whig oligarchical government was absolutely necessary for the guidance of the helm. The successors of George the Third came upon a new period, when the House of Commons had grown into a dominant power, and the House of Lords was no longer the narrow aristocracy which it had been in the previous century.

The charge made against George the Third by the last generation, and sometimes still heard, in the matter of "Personal Government," related to his conduct towards his various Cabinets in the period now under review. But it is precisely here that we trace a change. If there is one point on which historical opinion has settled down more than another, it is on the character of the Whig factions, the tattered fringes of the old Whig oligarchy, which, in their frantic struggles for power, tortured the Sovereign during the first decade of his reign. It was the inherent feebleness of these successive Ad-

ministrations which dragged the nation into the difficulties from which it only emerged at last by a convulsive effort. It was the King's duty to provide better government than they supplied: our sympathies cannot but be with him during his arduous efforts to provide it. If the course of the struggle handed the country over to the delightful and amiable, but scarcely less incompetent Lord North, it is not the King who was to blame.

Fairly regarded, the national misfortunes in this respect are the price paid by Englishmen for the Protestant Succession. A long period of dictatorship by the great Whig families, if the term may be used for a body of men, was instinctively felt by the nation to be necessary in order to secure this Succession. But no party can last for ever; and, great as the obligations of the country had once been to Walpole and the whole party, they were now entirely worn out. What was the use of the boasted English Constitution, if it did not provide a counterpoise for the emergency? Where was it to be found? Not in the House of Lords; for there on emergencies the "factions" combined sufficiently to triumph. Not in the House of Commons; for it was as yet unable to take an independent part. The Crown remained. It had to work its way by such methods as were open to it; and these were by no means the best in themselves, but the best available. The people were with the King; he thoroughly represented the nation; he could

no longer bear bad government, nor could they; the event justified his action.

Perhaps, in support of this view, the words of one who certainly did not err on the side of monarchical proclivities, nor rise above many vulgar errors in relation to this King, may here be quoted. After protesting against an overstrained prerogative on the one hand, and a mere, ornamental monarchy on the other, Lord Brougham thus treats the "Personal Government" of George the Third:—

"He only discharged the duty of his station by thinking for himself, acting according to his conscientious opinion, and using his influence for giving these opinions effect. . . . He set one example which is worthy of imitation in all times. He refused to be made a State puppet in his Minister's hands, and to let his name be used either by men whom he despised, or for purposes which he disapproved. Nor could any one ever accuse him of ruling by favourites; still less could any one, by pretending to be the people's choice, impose himself on his vigorous understanding." *

In the other and later conflict with Ministers, in which the King still more fully represented his people—that which immediately preceded the advent to power of William Pitt—the verdict of the best modern writers has gone with the King. If they do not defend his course, or if they only defend it on the plea of necessity, they still more blame the conduct of Fox and his friends. If the one made an unconstitutional use of his position, the others far more blameably strained every Constitutional usage which had hitherto been sanctioned. He acted with

* "Statesmen of the Time of George III.," First series, 2nd ed., p. 14.

and for the people; they against the people and for their party.

And this is the point. Personal government in a sense we may indeed attribute to George the Third; for no one ever, in any nation, or at any period, paid more minute and unwearied attention to every detail of administration; but it was the nation governing itself in the person of the Sovereign. In all the leading events of the reign—in the American War, the French Wars, the conclusion of Treaties, the support of William Pitt, and even, for some time, of Lord North, the treatment of Ireland, the narrow but conscientious Protestantism which refused to concede the political claims of the Roman Catholics—in all these the great, and generally the overwhelming majority of the people went with their representative man, the King. We scarcely need except the mistaken policy in which he embarked with reference to Wilkes, or the repressive measures which he and his Ministers held to be necessary at the time of the French Revolution; for in the former case the violence of mob-law soon produced a reaction, and in the latter the malcontents were far more than balanced by the mass of the people. And then how transient and merely tumultuous were the popular ebullitions with which he was assailed, often the mere product of ignorance and hard times! How deep, how lasting, how dignified was the settled feeling of the nation! Witness the scenes at his Accession and Coronation, his tem-

porary illnesses and his recoveries, his progresses through the country, his visits to the fleet and dock-yards, his birthdays, his Jubilee; witness the sustained feeling of the people during the long final period of his blind and insane solitude, and their emotion at his death! The nation admired, respected, learnt to trust him implicitly, as if he were its father. This is no figure of speech. It passionately loved and pitied him; unfeignedly, with every mark of dejection, mourned his loss.

Having premised so much on the position of the Sovereign, we must now trace his course in the first of the Periods before us. In watching the action of the young King, "born and educated in this country," and glorying "in the name of Briton," at the critical and much canvassed period of the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, we may learn something as to the outlines of British Foreign Policy at an instructive moment. It was just when the modern Empire had been securely founded, under the auspices of the late King, by the genius of Chatham; and when the new Government, under the direction of a youth, lately come of age, resolved to bring about a peace which should leave the country free to pursue its advantages.

We need only here recapitulate the general facts out of which the War, destined to have such great issues, grew.* It was, in fact, nothing more or less than a war of resistance to insult and aggression.

* See the Chapter on the "Rise of the Modern British Empire under George the Second."

During the long and pacific reign of Walpole the Bourbon family in Spain, France, and Italy had quietly achieved the position which Louis the Fourteenth, bridled by William the Third and Marlborough, had vainly attempted to obtain. It was the direct consequence of the temporary withdrawal of Great Britain from Continental interference which has been already noticed. The natural accompaniment of that withdrawal, a secret Family Compact already formed, was now only too visible in the growing arrogance of the tone adopted by France and Spain towards England, and in their nearly successful attempt to exclude British commerce from the Mediterranean, from the West Indies, from South America and the Pacific; while France in the East was embarked on a grand career of Indian conquest, and in the West had almost succeeded in strangling the British Colonies in America by surrounding them with a line of fortified possessions. In every part of the globe the British were not only rivalled, but in danger of being crushed. It is difficult at the present day to imagine the Imperial race brought so low, or to rate too highly the forces which enabled it to emerge. This is why Lord Chatham, the great agent in the recovery, must, even in George the Third's reign, be placed in the front as the exponent of British Foreign Policy. Though he had been dethroned from the extraordinary height to which he had been borne on the shoulders of the people, it was his policy which formed the standard from which the country never afterwards receded, his

name which, long after it had ceased to represent any personal power, stood equivalent with Europe for army, navy, and diplomacy.

The Peace of Paris, or Fontainebleau, is the best commentary on the policy of the war. Condemned at the time, and not seldom afterwards, by potent voices; gained by the Bute influence, the most unpopular in our modern history; hateful in the eyes of the great man who had taught Britannia "to rule the waves;" yet it was substantially a good Treaty. Its merits were these. It secured all that was really required for the new Empire; it treated her allies honourably; it displayed an example of moderation and good sense which bore fruit in later times.

And here it occurs naturally to observe that this is only one of many instances of so-called diplomatic folly which have been quoted against the English from the days of Philippe de Comines downward. "Never," says that earliest and acutest of political writers, "was there any treaty between the French and the English but the French always overreached them by their sense and ability." They fight, say others, like lions, and then they throw away the blood and money they have lavished, from a simple inability to understand the value of what they have gained. But, to take this particular case, what said Lord Granville, a former Prime Minister, a man of consummate ability and experience, and who had no motive for disguising the truth, for he was at this time very near the point of death? He called it

“the most glorious war and the most honourable peace the nation ever saw.”* Later generations have confirmed his verdict.

The fact is, as we can dare to say now, with all Lord Chatham’s claim to our admiration, the time had come when the ardent spirit to which the nation owed so much required to be checked. It is quite true that Great Britain might have retained more than she did. She might have kept Havana, the fruit of a glorious feat of arms; but it would have been a premature destruction of the Spanish Colonial Empire. She might have kept some more of the West Indian islands; but was it worth the price of continuing the war? Was it wise to reduce rival Powers too much? Would not the permanence of a peace have been rendered impossible if she had insisted on standing out for all she had gained by a series of brilliant victories? Could, for instance, the French have ever desisted from the attempt to recover Belleisle, the retention of which would have been felt by them much as the possession of the Isle of Wight by the French would be felt by the English? The Government wisely reckoned up their gains, and they were sufficient without these later acquisitions.

Let us see what those gains were. The war had saved Gibraltar and recovered Minorca, at that time considered as important for the defence of British interests as Malta is now. The entrance to the Mediterranean was secure. The armaments of France

* Lord Stanhope’s “History of England,” IV., 272.

and Spain in that sea might be now at any time divided from those on their Western Coasts. By driving the French from North America, the belt of young Colonies, of which at that time England never dreamt except as part of itself, had been saved ; the prospects of their unlimited development, of that extraordinary extension which has since taken place over the whole Continent, had been happily acquired. Excluded from the rest of India, the French might well be suffered to retain Pondicherry. Surrounded by British possessions, the few West Indian islands which they were to retain were not grudged. Great Britain had enough ; more than she could then manage, as events soon proved. She had paid back with interest the insults of half a century ; and no country can afford to neglect that species of attack. No Spanish inhibition could henceforth avail to stop the progress of British commerce, on coasts where British merchants had been treated as pirates.

Perhaps, also—for this is a typical Treaty, and requires more space than others—it may be worth while to remark that it was scarcely less really satisfactory in its relation to the brave ally whom the British have been so vehemently accused of deserting. If we take a comprehensive view of the support which had been given to Frederick the Great in the Seven Years War, we shall find that it was through England alone—her gold, her troops, her diplomacy, her efforts for the sake of Hanover—that he had emerged from the tremendous conflict in which he had deli-

berately chosen to involve himself. Without that help he must, in spite of his marvellous genius, have succumbed to the overwhelming forces marshalled against him. Was there to be no limit to it? Was he really left in the lurch, so as to lose the benefit of the sacrifices which the two countries had made? There is one simple answer. The Peace of Paris was no sooner concluded than, Austria and Prussia being left alone in conflict, means were instantly found to bring the war to an end. The *status quo* was found to be a very good termination. The Prussian King had gained quite all that he deserved to gain. And as for Great Britain, she had fought for the maintenance of the Protestant interest in Europe; for the freedom of the minor States, one of which, Hanover, was her own, from the domination of the more powerful, some of which were also her most dangerous rivals and enemies. Not only was Canada, as Pitt said, conquered in Germany, but some of these enemies must have been fought on British shores if they had not been fought on the Continent. The menaces of Marshal Saxe were no idle boast. The policy of William and Anne and Marlborough, even of Chatham himself, had, in short, been triumphantly vindicated. The nation showed that it knew when to stop.

How difficult has it always been to discover the exact moment when a war ought to stop! What political convulsions has it always produced in England! From the Opposition has always proceeded a cry of indignation when these Treaties are made; it

becomes a popular cry, and it is not difficult to find a victim. On this occasion it was Lord Bute who was loudly accused, but without the slightest cause, of having received an immense bribe. The truth is that the crooked paths in which the Ministers who make these Treaties find themselves obliged, as by some fate, to walk, beget the natural opinion that their work is tainted by corruption, or by mere selfish party-motive. It was so with the Peace of Utrecht, when England was supposed to have flung away the conquests of Marlborough in shameful subservience to a bedchamber intrigue, though the soundness of that Treaty is now very generally admitted. It was so with the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, when, with more reason, the Ministry were blamed for relinquishing Cape Breton to the French, and (the single instance in British history) stooping to the disgrace of giving hostages for the fulfilment of their obligations. Yet in all these Treaties alike the main object had been attained. The British Colonies and Dependencies had been protected, guaranteed, set free, their communications strengthened, their danger from hostile combinations provided against in the future. Their freedom carried with it that of British commerce.

If this is the key to the Treaties which culminated in that of Paris in 1763—and we can here only give results—if this was the principle laid down by invariable practice at the very foundation of the Modern Empire, it may be well to pause here for a moment, and,

before proceeding to enquire how far subsequent wars and treaties were conducted on the same general principle, to meet the question whether this principle was a mere outcome of arrogance, greediness, and selfishness, a Foreign Policy unworthy of a high-minded Christian nation ; or whether, on the contrary, it is one of which we have no reason to be ashamed. These are questions which lie at the root of much truly British self-depreciation. What are the facts ?

Great Britain in the Seventeenth Century found herself starting on her career of migration, settlement, and trade somewhat later than nations which, obeying the first impulses of maritime discovery, had already appropriated, as they considered, vast Continents and groups of islands which they could not in any way pretend to have really occupied. Nevertheless, they did but follow a natural instinct in attempting to exclude intruders ; the British did but follow a natural instinct in resolving that they would not be excluded. Should either of them be altogether condemned ? In some Utopian, best-possible world all nations may act on cosmopolitan principles ; but it is absurd to ignore in human nature, as we have it, the operation of simple, straightforward, patriotic principles which seem to be planted there for the express purpose of extending human progress. These principles lead nations to think it a virtue to develop their own trade, and the influence necessary to promote that trade, in all directions which are fairly open to them without infringing upon the just claims of their

neighbours; and also to think it a virtue to retain what they or their ancestors have spent life and goods in acquiring. These come to them as first principles; no one questions them.

Yet wars must arise out of these principles when they take shape. It is by this very clash of different national interests, necessarily conflicting interests, this din of arms, these very faults and infirmities of our nature—all the while, however, affording the very sphere of exercise required for the formation of the higher moral qualities—that the course of the world is guided onward and onward in the paths of perpetual improvement and eventual civilisation. Each nation supplies its own quota in its own turn, prolonged for a longer or shorter time according to its capacity. Experience teaches a further lesson. Capacity for the development of successful colonies and commerce seems to be pretty much in proportion to the goodness and freedom of the Home Government.

Instead, therefore, of being ashamed of the principles on which the British Empire was founded (though there are some exceptional cases of unworthy proceeding in India before the attention of the nation was called to them), there is rather cause for admiration. Given the lawfulness of trade, we grant the necessity of trading settlements, and postulate the duty of defending them. British wars and treaties may all be traced to this principle. But there is something besides. In the course of her progress Great Britain has prac-

tically found her duties to her own subjects correspond with her duties to her neighbours. Her mixed Continental and Colonial position—we may add, her religious position as the head of the Reformed Communions—developed on her part a persistent hostility to tyrants which also provided for her own defence. The doctrine of the Balance of Power was only another phrase for that elementary duty.* The support of the weak made her strong. The respect for International Law which she enforced at every sacrifice, coincided with her own interest, her own honour. With the internal concerns of other States she never interfered, except when and so far as those concerns affected her own rights, her own safety, her own existence as a nation. But it is still more to her honour that her successes in war were invariably followed by a modest retreat from the invidious position which she might have been justified in assuming.

Not that it is necessary to attribute, with complacent optimism, this latter virtue to the deliberate forethought and judgment either of the Government or people. It is rather the compensation, the self-acting balance, only traceable by close observers, provided, like that of the Crown above mentioned, by a free Constitution. Self-government involves an ultimate appeal to the nation. Nations rush with ardour into war when its necessity, sometimes only its supposed necessity, is fairly understood. They

* See the Chapter on "The True Meaning of the Balance of Power."

soon grow weary of it when the needful sacrifices are brought home to them. Their weariness, even when successful, leads them to desire terms which are often inconsistent with the position they have attained. The members of the Government which has carried through the war—the men who alone knew its secret springs, and have staked their all upon the issue—are the last to see this change of opinion or to recognise its justice; but they have to give way; and when they have done so, the popular voice generally turns against them. So much the worse for them. It is, so far, a melancholy retrospect; yet, on the whole, the right course has been pursued. Contemporaries complain; immediately subsequent histories echo their complaints. But posterity ratifies.

CHAPTER III.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SECOND PERIOD (1763—1784).

WHEN we turn from the considerations which display and justify the Foreign Policy of Great Britain at the conclusion of the first period of our history, and regard the position of the young Monarch amongst his Ministers, in what a labyrinth do we find him involved! What a task awaited him! Pierced by the reed on which he leaned, the incompetent Lord Bute, his mother's friend (surely never anything but

an honourable friendship); fretted by the busy feebleness of the Duke of Newcastle; obliged by the necessity of the case to use such an unworthy tool as the elder Fox; harassed and insulted by the pedantic George Grenville, and then, subsequently, balked by the obstinate selfishness of Lord Temple in his earnest effort to place once more at the head of the Government the only fit man, Lord Chatham; with a Whig party split up, chiefly on personal grounds, into four distinct factions, and a Tory party which for half a century had been under the cloud of imputed Jacobitism, and was scarcely a party at all; with London all the while pretty much governed by the fiercest mobs; the only marvel is that the King retained his throne. It was only astonishing that the country fell into no greater disorder than was incident to the purification of its Constitution by means of a drastic purge. That purge was administered at the hands of the most consummate of all demagogues, ancient or modern, John Wilkes. It was compounded with the aid of the most scurrilous, and yet most able, political physician a State ever possessed, the mysterious Junius. It was during this eclipse of every nobler element, in the Government or out of it, that the conspicuous public and private virtues of the Sovereign came to be recognised as the rallying-flag of the country. For better or worse, as we may think, it was the character which he now displayed that rendered him, almost unconsciously to himself, the powerful monarch he became as the representative

of his people. It was during the London riots in 1768 that Benjamin Franklin, no mean judge, wrote thus of him:—

“What the end will be, God only knows. But some punishment seems preparing for a people who are ungratefully abusing the best Constitution and the best King any nation was ever blessed with.”

And again, in 1769:—

“I can scarcely conceive a King of better dispositions, of more exemplary virtues, or more truly desirous of promoting the welfare of his subjects.”

And again, writing in 1784:—

“If George the Third had had a bad private character, and John Wilkes a good one, the latter would have turned the former out of the Kingdom.” *

When we remember the position Franklin held in England, and how intimately he was bound up with the whole American struggle, such a testimony, perfectly uniform, and extending over sixteen years, must carry great weight. It might be matched from numerous other sources; but it is enough.

During the early part of the period under review, Ministry succeeded Ministry, each worse or feebler than the last. When Chatham was at length prevailed upon to take office, his services were no longer of value. Bodily illness, mental debility, inextricable relations with factious statesmen, cloud upon cloud, obscured the great luminary; and it was only after

* Franklin's Private Diary, quoted by Lord Stanhope, “History of England,” V., 234; and Graham's “History of the United States,” quoted by Mr. Jesse, “Life and Reign of George III.,” II., 79.

he ceased to be responsible for the government of the country that his counsels were once more heard to any effect. Too late, indeed, to be available. While the Government was in a state of chaos the irreparable measures had been taken. A master-mind alone could have struck out a wise and yet dignified policy, which might have prevented the quarrel with the American Colonies; but where was such a mind to be found? It was under Chatham's own Administration—he himself incapacitated, yet holding the reins of power—that one of the chief steps in their alienation had been made. As Grenville's Stamp Act had been the first of these steps, so Charles Townshend's measure for taxing American imports was the second. It only remained for the Tory Lord North to add the coping-stone to the doomed fabric of the Whigs, by retaining the duty on tea when all other taxation had been at length repealed. Then came the unappeasable resistance, the burst of pent-up, furious passion on both sides, the blunders and confusion, the horrors of Civil War, the failure of the mother country, the eager alliance of France, Spain, and Holland with the revolted Colonies, the storm raging on every side, Scotland and Ireland in a dangerous state, the Northern Powers of Europe forming an "Armed Neutrality" against the obnoxious naval Power which seemed to be at its last gasp; and then, at the end of another Seven Years War, the Independence of the United States. But along with it, through the victories of Rodney and the defence of Gibraltar—

yes, and the gallant bearing of the monarch—came also the glorious extrication of Great Britain from her perilous position.

The quarrel which led to this issue, then thought so disastrous, is a trite subject, yet in any survey of British Foreign Policy it must find a prominent place, and all the more since the exceeding difficulties which then beset the question seem to be already passing out of sight. It has become the fashion, now that we are more than a century in advance of our forefathers and entirely at one with our American kindred, to speak of the course which should have been pursued as the most obvious thing possible. The mass of complicated influences which produced the war and the separation are now treated in the lump, and are stigmatised as the mere outburst of passion and pride. It is a common topic in newspapers and on platforms to denounce the stupid intoxication of the King and people as the natural consequence of a too-aristocratic Constitution, impossible to imagine under the illumination of the Nineteenth Century. And yet let us cluster together a little group of facts and opinions.

In the first place, it should remove some modern political bitterness if it were remembered that both parties in the State were, as we have seen, equally responsible for bringing on the catastrophe.

In the next place, we are apt to confound distinct things. There was the right of taxation; there was the policy of taxation; there was the separate ques-

tion of independence; there was the question of duty when the revolt had once developed into war. On only one of these is there, or can there be, anything like a general agreement. On that point—the policy of taxation—every one can now see that it was a mistake to stand to it in any form. And yet not only is it easy to be wise after the event, but even the policy of concession may take a different aspect according to the time at which it is made. What would have been of extreme value at one time may only aggravate differences when made at another. The great Chatham, whose eloquence denounced, when too late, the proceedings which led to the conflict, died in the very act of exhorting his countrymen never to give way to American Independence. Even the seditious “Junius” maintained the right of taxing the colonies; even Burke declined to deny the right—“it was too deep a question.”* He, the one statesman who could boast of something like a consistent identification with the course which we may fairly consider ought to have been pursued throughout, declared “the constitutional superiority of Great Britain to be as necessary for America as for ourselves, and consistent with all the liberties a sober and spirited American ought to desire.”† The gentle poet Cowper defended the obstinate resistance of the King when the struggle had commenced, because he was a “trustee with respect to every inch of his territories, and might

* Speech on Conciliation, 1775.

† Bristol Speech, 1774.

not resign them to an enemy, or transfer his right to govern them to any, not even to themselves, so long as it is possible for him to keep it.”*

Above all, the attitude of the people and the Parliament ought to be closely observed. It was no transient freak of passion. Passion is short-lived. When the country was appealed to, it gave such majorities in support of the British policy that the Opposition took the rare step of altogether seceding from Parliament. There was surely something more than pride and passion at the bottom of a movement so widespread, so prolonged, so defended. Pride and passion there were; but on what were they founded, and with what more respectable qualities were they associated? A very slight glance at the political history of those times may be enough to refresh our memory.

Let us observe, then, that the question of rebellion and separation on the part of their colonies presented itself to the moral sense of the British people as a grievous crime. When the mother of these States had settled, chartered, governed, and defended them, it never occurred to those at home that they had not as direct an interest in them as they had in any county of old England. The idea of their independence was perfectly new. No modern people had as yet dreamt of it.

In addition to this sense of injustice, the feeling of indignation at colonial ingratitude had taken an

* Donne's "Correspondence of George III. with Lord North," II., 401.

exceedingly strong hold on the British mind. The Seven Years War had been waged by this country for British and Colonial self-defence and for commercial freedom. It had been waged beyond the seas in three distinct regions, India, the Mediterranean, and America, and of these the last had occupied by far the greatest part of the national interest. The two millions of British subjects settled in North America had been defended from France and Spain at a cost of life and treasure which, in those days of small things, seemed, and was, immense. It was a service which they could not be expected to perform for themselves. They had been set free—free to march forward on their prosperous career. There were not wanting some who foresaw that, the foreign pressure once removed, a change of relations would some day take place between mother and daughter; but perhaps no one foresaw that it would commence all at once. If passion was superinduced upon this moral sense of wrong, it hardly deserves, however wise it would have been to have choked it down, the contempt and reprobation so easily visited upon the actors on the stage of that distant period. The ancients have well taught us that indignation was given to man for the purpose of helping him to overcome wrong, and support the right.

And pride is also in the abstract a bad quality; yet national pride is, in some sense, a virtue. It need not be the pride of arrogance; but the possessors of a great inheritance are not likely to

take much trouble about it, still less defend it at great cost and risk, if they are not in some sense proud of it. And the Empire had been but just acquired. It was but yesterday that the glorious death of Wolfe, on the heights of Abraham, had seemed to be a sacrifice offered up to the union of the whole British race on either side of the Atlantic.

Still further. To the sense of moral indignation, and of the outrage done to a just pride, was added a not unreasonable fear lest the example of revolt should spread to the other members of the British Empire, and even to the very heart, to one of the three kingdoms, to Ireland. Was the whole fabric to collapse like a child's castle of cards? This was the aspect in which the matter was viewed by all thoughtful people. It was that in which the King chiefly regarded it. In his Letters to Lord North he frequently expressed the feeling in every variety of form. And yet it is not perhaps sufficiently remembered that during the progress of the struggle this very King, now so often charged with the whole responsibility of the war, had been by no means one of those most bent upon harsh measures. He had steadily opposed George Grenville's policy of violence, and has left it on record that in 1766 he was for a Repeal of the Stamp Act rather than for enforcing it with the sword. Though he would have preferred some modification of the Repeal, he supported his Ministers in the total abolition of the tax.*

* Rockingham Papers, I., 301; Grenville Papers, III., 353.

But, when the sword was once drawn, it was a different thing. Independence presented itself as something which it was a duty at all costs to prevent. No inherent right was ever claimed for it; all policy seemed to be against it. "A small State," said the King to Lord North, "may certainly subsist, but a great one mouldering cannot get into an inferior situation, but must be annihilated. By perseverance we may bring things to a peace; by giving up the game we are destroying ourselves to prevent our being destroyed."* "The country has a right to have the struggle continued till convinced it is in vain."† Lord Chatham had frequently said as much. The able Lord Shelburne, afterwards for a short time Prime Minister, following Chatham's lead, had gone so far as to pronounce that when America became independent the sun of England would set. Or take a modern Whig writer, who for the most part blames the war, and all concerned in it, in unmeasured terms. Mr. Massey admits that "England had no alternative, when her dependencies broke into rebellion, but an appeal to the sword." He shows that the people would not have allowed the King to avoid the issue. "The war had been popular with all classes." When the country at last perceived that it could not conquer, and was only wasting its revenues, then the King, "discerning the temper of his people, reluc-

* Sept. 26, 1780. Donne's "Correspondence of George III. with Lord North."

† Jan. 31, 1778, *ib.*

tantly gave up the contest"*—not, however, till France and Spain had been humbled—the merit of which "obstinacy" Mr. Massey does not admit.

Nor ought we to forget how strong must have appeared the duty of supporting those loyal members of the Colonies—in many districts a powerful minority, in some for a time a majority—who relied with entire confidence on engagements which had always been reckoned of the most sacred obligation. At the very least, while perceiving that a different conduct would have been wise and politic, and that forbearance and magnanimity would, from the first, have been the proper attitude of the nation, we are certainly bound to remember how very gradually the light dawned even upon great minds, how little reason there was at first to expect what actually occurred, and how difficult it is to draw back when a line of action has already been taken up. The King was certainly far less to blame than George Grenville and Charles Townshend, the two leading Ministers of their day; and yet there were few abler men than these. We bring, then, the failure home to the state of political parties at this period, to the occurrence of the crisis at a moment when the Constitution was in a transitional and unsettled state, and when the relations of the Colonies to the mother country, habitually regarded too much from only one point of view, had

* "History of England during the Reign of George III.," vol. III., pp. 166, 170.

been hitherto neglected on their domestic and political side.

Perhaps, however, it may teach us to be less severe even in this mitigated judgment on the conduct of affairs, if we look at what took place only forty years ago. Just as we have hitherto relied mainly on the testimony of Whig statesmen and authors, so let us remember what a Whig Government thought it right to do in our own day. Did it view Rebellion, when it flamed in Canada, with eyes very different from those of their predecessors? Did Great Britain decline to interfere with the will of the rebels? Or did she, without hesitation, send out an army and navy to support the loyal Colonists, and to re-assert British superiority? Was the danger arising from the alliance of Canada with the full-grown United States so much greater than that of the same States, in their infancy, with France, Spain, and Holland? Rather was it not considerably less? And yet has the action taken in 1838 been reckoned amongst British crimes?

It will hardly be considered a digression if this illustration be allowed to serve another purpose. We may paint the incompetence of our early Georgian Administrations in colours too little relieved by touches of light. Let us put in one of them. The happy relations which have, with so little interruption, existed between Great Britain and Canada were first established, as if by way of compensation, at this very time. If we regard the state of religious and

political opinion at this date, it is no slight credit to the King and to Lord North that the Roman Catholics in Canada, but just subdued, were granted perfect freedom of worship, that representative institutions were commenced, and that trial by jury was made the law of the land. How much credit is due to the King for this enlightened feeling may easily be gathered from Horace Walpole's bitter attack on him and the bishops for their so-called treachery to "Protestantism,"* and he is a fair representative of a large class of opinion. It was on this foundation that William Pitt and the King built the further fabric of Constitutional Government in the Colonies, which will be mentioned in its place. Let it only be here observed that the vital lessons necessary for binding colonies to a mother country had been already learnt under the severe and sobering teaching of experience. From that moment it may truly be affirmed that, if the British were about to lose a part of their Empire by lack of political sagacity, they had secured the adherence of the rest for at least many generations.

But we may not yet dismiss the momentous issues of this American policy. We may well linger over them. It would be an exaggeration to say that no event of greater magnitude ever happened in modern history than the severance of the British race into two halves, but it would not be far from the truth. Let us, then, measure the responsibilities of those who brought on the American War by the prospects they

* "Last Journals," I., 353.

might fairly have entertained of success. Let us next regard the consequences of their failure, and so conclude.

If the mother country was to be drained of her blood and treasure, if posterity was to be called on to pay the debt, then to a sense of the error of the policy might well be added the reproach of reckless expenditure in a hopeless cause. Burke, indeed, with his magnificent prophetic rhetoric, laboured in most copious speeches to prove that the task was utterly beyond the means of his country. He turned out to be right; but it was a far more balanced struggle than he had anticipated. There were times when all but the most courageous of the colonists had lost all heart, moments when the immortal Washington himself declared that nothing could have saved the cause but the infatuation of the British commanders. Nor was the desperate nature of the contest less felt in England. Three days before the news arrived of Cornwallis's surrender, even Franklin had "despaired of seeing the war finished in his time." The conduct of the war was a tissue of errors. One great man in command of the English forces might have turned the scale. A Rodney on the American coast, or even a Cornwallis in full command on shore, might well have over-matched Washington, great as he was, and Rochambeau. It was no doubt well in the end that it was so; but, from a military point of view, there was no intrinsic absurdity in the attempt to preserve the integrity of the Empire.

What is to be admired on the British side is exactly what is often most ignorantly condemned, the splendid spirit which, when all the world was in arms against the British isles, refused to succumb till an honourable peace could be obtained. How grand is the position of the unshaken sovereign—*justus et tenax propositi*—who, after it was demonstrated that nothing more could be done with the revolted colonies, yet held out to the last, till the pretensions of the old hereditary enemies of England could be reduced, and a position worthy of the ancient British renown be attained once more. As Nelson said, in the pause of battle at Copenhagen, when he insisted on sealing the famous letter offering terms, “This is no time to appear hurried or informal,” so said the King in other words, when he refused to be driven by popular clamour into a premature peace: “We are contending for our whole consequence, whether we are to rank among the great powers of Europe, or to be reduced to one of the least considerable. He that is not stimulated by this consideration does not deserve to be a member of this community. We have it not at this hour in our power to make peace: it is by steadiness and by exertions that we are to get into a position to effect it; and, with the assistance of Divine Providence, I am confident we shall find our enemies forced to look for that blessing.”

The words of brave men are often prophetic. This letter was written in June, 1781, to encourage the fainting heart of the Prime Minister. Only a few

months afterwards the gallant Rodney had destroyed the chief fleet of the French; and not long after that, the Spaniards had shattered themselves to pieces against the Rock of Gibraltar. The Dutch had already learnt to bewail their miscalculations. The confederated hosts once more collapsed as in the days of Chatham. Hawke and Wolfe had found worthy successors in Rodney and Elliot. The time had come when the war might be concluded with honour. The Treaty of Versailles might have been managed better, but it was no disgrace to the nation. The King, to whom the loss of the colonies had been agony, in whose constitution the war had set deep that tendency to mental disease from which he so often suffered, could now look John Adams in the face, and greet the first ambassador from independent America with the famous words: "I was the last to consent to the separation; I will be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power."

The magnanimity of the King ought to colour the reflections of all who approach the subject. The old bitterness has long passed away. In placing ourselves where Englishmen stood a hundred years ago, there is no need to depreciate the courage and conduct of the Americans. They acted as Englishmen might be expected to act. If they had carried with them across the Atlantic the old English spirit, the old English education in freedom, if they learnt with marvellous rapidity the elementary art of war from the troops sent to reduce them, they also learnt from

the English Parliament the arguments by which they defended their conduct and justified the advance of their aims. They rose at first in order to resist what they held to be tyranny; they never thought of independence. That their aims rose higher and higher was the fruit of the unrestrained rhetoric of English orators.

Whether it was patriotic on the part of Chatham, Burke, and Fox, to counteract the arms of their country by the free and fierce use of language which was in itself more than armies to the colonists, was then, and has often since been, matter of bitter dispute. Such is the fate, such the defect, of party government. But what of that? If party government is only another name for freedom, for the Constitution, for whatever is most valuable on earth, then this terrible weight which a free country wears around its neck whenever it engages in conflict with others is, after all, to be lightly borne. But at least we should remember to measure the difficulties of the Government by the magnitude of the opposition at home as well as by the force of hostile combinations abroad.

And now for the results. As the combatants could hardly foresee them, it is incorrect to allow them to affect our judgment upon their motives. But they form an important item in our present survey, and they are easily summed up in the main. The American War (or rather the war with all the world) cost the nation more than a hundred millions of money, and

many thousand valuable lives; it embittered its relations with its own flesh and blood; and some of its ill effects were traceable, as in all civil wars, for many years afterwards. But on the mere credit and debtor account the British were not losers. They gained an income if they acquired a debt. As Mr. Massey observes, we obtained "a commerce of a hundred millions with free America in lieu of a barren sovereignty which we could not have retained."* Many writers, like Lord John Russell,† believe that nothing could have prevented a speedy separation if it had not come as it did; and even Mr. Green admits that "England arose from the war stronger and greater than ever."‡ The conflict with France and Spain must certainly have come but little later. We can now see that it was well it came when it did. It was thus that Great Britain was to secure ten years of rapid recuperation, and gain an enormous and unprecedented development before the still greater trial of the French Revolution still more terribly taxed her resources.

And, again, it was well, if separation was, as it would seem, inevitable, that the States should have gained their independence before the cry of Republican France should summon them to her aid. The combined action of two such fierce democracies, in the first ardour of their struggle for existence, might have been ruinous to the cause of free Con-

* "History of England," &c., III., 79.

† "Life and Letters of Charles James Fox," I., 151.

‡ "History of the English People," p. 762, 1st. ed.

stitutions, and perhaps an overmatch for the resources of Great Britain. At least, it must be admitted that the two severed portions of the race learnt in the very act of separation to respect one another, and this is the foundation of all good relationship. It is also easy to see how the scars which have attended the struggle might have been very much deeper and more troublesome to heal.

In dealing with the principles of the American War we have covered the foreign policy of the period. View the war as we may, it was a Civil War, during the height of which France and Spain, whose aggressions had been repelled with interest in the Seven Years' War, once more strove—not unnaturally—to recover their losses. They believed they had found their opportunity. They made an unprovoked and unjustifiable attack. They failed. Of her former acquisitions Minorca was the only one of any importance which Great Britain had to relinquish at the Peace of Versailles; and this might probably have been saved by the cession of Gibraltar. That cession was prevented by the combination of Fox and Pitt, representing, in opposition to Lord Shelburne, the deliberate conviction of the nation. How could it be otherwise after Lord Heathfield's grand exploit?

Thus the modern British empire, founded in self-defence, was all the more firmly planted by the agency of the first great storm which had assailed it. The British oak struck its roots the deeper for the

loss of branches which, by their too great weight, were impeding its growth. It was still young and vigorous enough to put forth fresh branches in their place, and the healthy verdure of the newer shoots soon filled up the void, and concealed the ravages of the furious elements.

CHAPTER IV.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING PITT'S PEACE- ADMINISTRATION (1784—1793).

THE period on which we now enter, perhaps the most glorious in our annals for the spectacle it presents of national progress, affords also the best indication of the deliberate foreign policy of Great Britain. Happily for her, the Continent was for the moment as yet untroubled by the volcanic eruption so soon to break forth. Though men fondly supposed that all need for British interference in its affairs had passed away with the late conflict, there was a general feeling that not a moment was to be lost in consolidating the Empire abroad, and in organising the many interests at home which had fallen into confusion. The stern lessons of the war had been learnt by the whole nation.

It is a relief, after the troubles of the past years of the reign, to contemplate the satisfaction of the harassed monarch who had at last found in the youthful Pitt a Minister to his mind. His simple

home-life, beautiful in that virtuous simplicity which commends itself to good taste, was as yet comparatively free from the misery subsequently brought on him by the conduct of his sons. The five years before his illness in 1788 were the happiest he was ever allowed to spend. "For twenty-two years," said he, complaining to Lord Temple of the "unprincipled Coalition" which had been forced on him in 1783, "I have been trying to keep the Government out of the narrow bounds of any faction." * Nothing could be more true. Now again, just as before, he and the nation required above all things a good and strong Administration. Lord North had been an improvement on his predecessors, but he had not only shown himself unequal to his task, but he had seriously lowered himself by joining the Coalition. And what a failure had that Coalition been! If the separate "factions" had been intolerable, the mere jumble of the discordant elements composing them, with the addition of Lord North, was self-condemned. It could only last a few months. But the Coalition answered one very useful purpose. It exposed the unfitness of Fox for a leading position, and it served to rally the whole country for the next twenty-three years round the great Chatham's greater son.

Was it mere fickleness that produced this sudden withdrawal of the popular favour from those who

* "Courts and Cabinets of George III.," by the Duke of Buckingham, I., 218.

had made the Peace which all desired? Was it mere disgust at the Coalition? Was it Fox's monstrous India Bill? Was it the opposition of the Whigs to the Reform of Parliament? All these causes have been assigned. But they are all inadequate, singly or together. They are important circumstances, and that is all. Far deeper lay the feeling of disgust at the tyrannical attempt to thrust the King down to the level of a Doge of Venice, and the admiration excited by the spirit-stirring spectacle of the championship of the Constitution by the youth whom Sheridan designated as "the angry boy." The one had gained their profound respect in spite of temporary unpopularity, and they felt they had been unjust to him. The position all at once taken up by the other caught their fancy, and enlisted all their sympathies. It was a strange thing—it had an element of "sport" in it—to watch the combat, to see this youth fighting almost single-handed against the whole serried mass of statesmen to whom the country had for so many years been accustomed to listen.

Conspicuous above all of these was one who seemed destined to the special greatness of a successful Prime Minister, and yet he sank in this conflict once and for ever before an inexperienced novice who had come up straight from college. Neither this country nor any other has seen an orator more exactly fitted by his natural gifts to command a senate than Charles James Fox. Nor was his mental cultivation inferior

to his abilities. Every social grace was at his service. Generous, witty, affectionate, the best of companions, the truest of friends, cradled in high politics, the readiest, brightest, most earnest, most convincing debater who has perhaps ever appeared, he seemed to exist for the express purpose of proving that vicious indulgence will never fail to bring its own punishment. In vain were uttered his magnificent appeals to all that was grand and noble. People observed the contrast to his theories presented by his low pursuits and his profligate character. They admired his speeches; they voted against him. They did not trust him. Violence, extreme lines of opinion, unbalanced and unpractical counsels, came naturally from such a man. They were unsuited to the steady genius of the British people, irreconcilable with their traditions, nauseous to their taste.

That British people turned almost as one man to William Pitt. They forgave his youth; for when had ever such a youth appeared? The sober, thoughtful men of all parties united. They had at last found what they wanted in the "personal government" of the sovereign, administered by one who, like Pericles at Athens, was the "first man" of his day. The commerce, the wealth of the country, the professional classes, the great middle class generally, headed by the mass of the nobility and gentry, carried with them the great mass of the people. It was a united country; and a free country, satisfied with its Government and fairly united within itself, can do great things.

William Pitt only comes before us in this sketch as the restorer and repairer of the imperial edifice which his father had been so largely concerned in building up. The acts by which he proved his title to be considered the best man his country could produce are familiar to all. It was on the basis of domestic legislation that he laid the foreign policy of Great Britain. Strong at home, she was respected and feared abroad. Abuses removed, while the Constitution was rigorously conserved, gave a sense of soundness and future permanence which spoke with a louder voice than mere oratory. The repose which attends the conviction that nothing is neglected, but everything duly weighed, that principles are regarded while for the moment particular acts might be misunderstood, all this—and it might be expanded to any extent—formed the public opinion which enabled "the pilot to weather the storm," when the storm pressed, as it did press, with "the broad shoulders of the hurricane."

From the very first he exhibited the hand of the master. The finances of the country, at his magic touch, shook themselves, as it were, into beautiful order, like chaotic fragments at the turn of a kaleidoscope. The Resolutions necessary to simplify and consolidate the duties in Customs, Excise, and Stamps, amounted to no less than 2,537. The commercial relations with France, which after the war were happily renewed, were established in all their breadth and liberality by Pitt—a work for all time.

The affairs of India, long and loudly crying to heaven for settlement, were placed on the basis which continued firm, through changes of every kind, down to our own day. The foundations of the Union with Ireland, which he was enabled at a later date to carry through, were broadly laid. The Reform of the House of Commons, repeatedly attempted by him, and only suspended under the pressure of events, took such a shape as could never afterwards be set aside, bearing fruit when ripe, more than ripe. Under the proud, disdainful hands of the austere young Commoner, who, with prescient deliberation, scattered about more peerages than all his predecessors, the House of Lords emerged out of its old condition of a close, aristocratic Chamber, into a virtually representative institution. Working along with his friend, the gifted Wilberforce, he all but lived to abolish the slave trade; for responsible statesmen could not do even such works as that in a day. In short, it is not too much to say that every portion of the national inheritance received new life, or was only prevented from receiving it by the unforeseen conflagration of Europe.

It has become a sort of historical trick—for it is nothing else—since the merits of the domestic legislation of Pitt have been forced upon the public notice, to draw a hard line between it and his foreign policy. He is to be reckoned a mere peace administrator, failing utterly and absurdly the moment he sallied forth out of his proper path. It must at once strike any candid person that this

is, to say the least, a very unnatural view, very improbable, very unlike what we should expect. It will, then, be necessary to look into the matter. What was his foreign policy? How far was it framed on the old lines? How far developed? How far was its course in the wars which succeeded the Peace of Versailles, identical with what was laid down during the earlier time? We shall see that there is good reason for considering this intervening peace period to possess a fair claim to enrolment as a truly typical period—typical and authoritative in many different directions, and in none more than in the sphere of foreign policy. And if the course pursued during the war is only a continuation and application of that which was laid down during the Peace, if it was a necessary course, one to be pursued at all hazards, and only failing where it could hardly but fail, what becomes of the historical trick? The mere want of success in particular operations affords no argument when all the circumstances are taken into account. We must aim at a larger view of the subject.

The position of Great Britain under Pitt's guidance may be briefly stated. Under that most rapid development both of agriculture and manufactures which was now taking place, in consequence of the great increase of population, and the intense activity of the commercial world, pushing its peaceful conquests into the new territories, while it immensely added to what it previously possessed in

the United States, the nation once more assumed, and at a bound, its leading place in Europe; it became more than ever the object of admiration and imitation. Men were amazed at the spectacle of the island-empire thus riding over the waves in triumph like some gallant vessel after a gale, and spreading once more her full cloud of canvas to the gentler breeze. Was it likely that the spectators should be quite lost in admiration? Could it be so without some tinge of jealousy and ill-will? Men must have been more than human to forget the past. What she had gained or kept, others had tried to gain or keep; or lost, and tried to take back from her. How would she deal with her immense responsibilities?

One thing even Pitt's Great Britain could not do. It could not recall the past. It was itself, by action or neglect to act, a part of it. In the temporary abeyance of the European concert, the very period at which incompetent British statesmanship was drifting into the loss of the American colonies, the partition of Poland had disgraced the age. The fatal step could never be retraced. With eager eyes strained to watch the motions of France and Spain, even Chatham had failed to understand the danger to the world arising from the unscrupulous ambition of the Empress Catherine. And now, after a career equally unscrupulous, the great man was to pass away around whom the European system had so long arranged itself that the world, from this cause alone, independent of others, stood perplexed and anxious

as to what would follow. There was good reason. The death of Frederick the Great was the signal for the unlocking of those violent and subtle forces which could no longer be restrained. The preparation of the mind of Western Europe by the unsettlement of opinion at home, and the example of the American Colonies beyond seas, was rapidly approaching completion. The English philosophy, transmitted across the Channel, had not improved by becoming a French philosophy, and the circumstances under which it was propagated were very much for the worse. The time had come when the old feudal society could no longer exist under the searching light which, impure, deceptive, partial as it was, was yet light. How was the British vessel to be piloted over the swelling waters? There were clouds enough in the horizon.

In presenting the situation as it then took shape we cannot by any means dispense with the familiar term, "Balance of Power." Its general principles and application will be found treated elsewhere. In this place it is only needful to notice how it affected British foreign policy. Hitherto applied chiefly to combine the nations against the tyranny of Spain or France, and but slightly in the adjustment of the relations of the new great powers, Russia and Prussia, to the rest it was now to receive a wider application. The death of Frederick did, as people foresaw, at once lead to the unsettling of the balance. In the very next year the smaller States of Europe

were in the uneasy condition of watch-dogs at night when a dangerous intruder, man or beast, is prowling about. There were more than one. There was a most unholy alliance between the capable and unscrupulous Catherine of Russia and the incapable Emperor Joseph of Austria. The busy meddling of the well-meaning man with a hundred questions which he did not understand made him a mere tool in the hands of the cleverer woman who understood what she was about very well. He was all the more dangerous. Was it safe for the rest of Europe to look on while the vast despotic empire of the East, swollen by the acquisition of the greater part of Poland, and consolidated from the Baltic to the Black Sea, swallowed up Turkey and Sweden? Could they refuse to attend while the Empress made her triumphal progress to the Crimea in company with the credulous Joseph, opened out to him hopes of a share in the spoils, and, by way of keeping him amused, suggested to him the dream of a revived Carlovingian Empire of the West, with himself at the head, and Italy once more a German appanage?* It was thus that what we now know as "the Eastern Question" first forced itself upon the attention of Europe just a hundred years ago. It was an essential ingredient in the Balance of Power, as indeed the French had seen long before.

* Yet Joseph, even while in the very process of being cajoled on the subject of "*les pauvres diables de Turcs*," had penetration enough to remark, "*Que diable faire de Constantinople?*" ("*Prince de Ligne, Letters*," &c., p. 55, ed. 1810, quoted in Creasy's "*Ottoman Turks*," p. 426).

Great Britain was affected by what was taking place in two very distinct directions, and in a third way less direct, but still more important. And, first, as regards the Mediterranean.

Independently of any effect on the general balance of Europe, or, through other powers, upon the safety of these islands, the immense preponderance which Russia had now acquired, and was moving rapidly forward to extend, was fatal to the freedom and to the development of British commerce both in the Baltic and Mediterranean. It was of little use to our people to have planted their trade firmly in the remote East and the remote West, if the Levant and the Black Sea were to be in the power of Russia to close against them, or if the independent Baltic States were to become the vassals of that Power. It was not a thing which could be left to chance. Russia had already taken advantage of British neglect, and then of British distress. Some means must be found of retaining independent action in spite of her. Happily, interest corresponded with duty. Not only had she come across the direct path of British commerce, but British honour was concerned in the support of a friendly State.

The Porte had been for centuries the firm ally of the English, and a word or two upon that connection must be said here. Like many other good beginnings, the alliance had commenced with Queen Elizabeth; and, in the first treaty of her reign, no other nations are mentioned as preceding England in the capitu-

lations and wide commercial privileges then granted, except France, Venice, and Poland. Since that time, by treaties constantly renewed, these liberal concessions had been confirmed. No small share of the Asiatic traffic, which, as its route through Europe changed from age to age, had left so many marks on the fortunes of the West, had thus fallen into English hands. For some generations the "Turkey merchant" had been the typical representative of English commercial wealth, and had scarcely yet been eclipsed by the rising fortunes amassed in the East and West Indies.

The alliance of the Porte with France was older, and their commercial relations with one another had also been of great importance to both countries; but hitherto the military and diplomatic advantages of the alliance had been at least equally cultivated. As Turkey was situated on the flank of the Austrian Empire, a diversion from that side had always been a part of the French war-policy; and this is why France was aware earlier than England of the danger arising from the side of the new Power which was thus about to destroy her ancient political combinations. England on the other hand, except when she interposed in favour of the Porte at the Peace of Carlowitz, had not till now begun to reckon on the Turkish alliance in a military sense. Chatham's policy had always favoured Russia as against France; and Fox (in 1783) had been deaf to the proposal of France that she and Great Britain should combine

to check the aggressions of Russia on Poland and Turkey. It had been a purely commercial connection, all the closer from the absence of those openings for disagreement which military alliances necessarily involve. Nor was the importance of the relations between India on the one hand, and the Turkish provinces in Asia and East Africa on the other, much less clearly understood by statesmen in Pitt's time than it has been since.

It was this old and valued ally which now lay crushed beneath the heel of the Muscovite. The late Treaty of Kainardji had detached the Tartars from the Turks, planted Russia on the shores of the Euxine, and established a Russian protectorate of the Christian vassal states of the Porte. The Turkish fleet had been destroyed. The Empress had now carried her conquests still further. The capture, in concert with Austria, of Oczakoff, distinctly announced the coming partition of the Ottoman Empire. It was now about to follow the fate of the still undigested Poland and Finland.

Still more pressing were affairs in the Baltic, for they were nearer home. It was here that a death-blow had been so recently aimed by the "Armed Neutrality" at the maritime supremacy of Great Britain. It has been noticed how, just when she was reeling in the struggle with her revolted colonies, with France and Spain and Holland on her back, the Empress had hurled this thunderbolt at her devoted head. Before long Russia was joined by Prussia,

Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, Naples, and the Empire. France, Spain, and the American Colonies accepted the principle, if they did not actually join the League. We must pause for a moment to consider whether Great Britain deserved this treatment. It is too often taken for granted that because she stood alone she was therefore in the wrong.

To make but the briefest statement consistent with our limits, this high-handed proceeding was nothing more or less than an attempt to force, upon the island-empire in its distress principles contrary to those "which had generally been acknowledged as the law of nations," and to those engagements with other powers under which they had "altered the primitive law, by mutual stipulations."* That "free ships should make free goods" had been allowed under certain special treaties for mutual benefit, but this provision was accompanied by the rule that "enemy ships should make enemy goods." The last was not a rule necessarily connected with the first, but supremely important in its operation; for it formed an effective security against the collusion which must otherwise take place. But what now occurred? By the Armed Neutrality the latter rule was simply abolished, while the former was peremptorily laid down; and thus the right of search could only be exercised with extreme difficulty. If Great Britain had consented, she would

* "British Declaration," *Annual Register*, XXIII., p. 349.

in fact have relinquished the power of preventing supplies of every kind from being poured into France, Spain, and the Colonies, with which she was in deadly conflict. The universal law was to be broken at a moment when its continuance, however displeasing to other nations, could alone enable her to bring the war to an end. She could at least rejoin that she would not yield her rights to force. Nor did she yield them. Unmoved, she defied the Confederacy. Her fortitude was rewarded. Her naval victories secured her position. In the next great war she found herself in accord on this question—one which we are now told was always so clear against her—with the very power which had previously led the way in denying her rights, and with the very powers against which she used them.

We shall come across this question again. For the present, it is enough to say that the League of the Armed Neutrality had dissolved with the Peace of Versailles. But it is obvious that the attitude of Russia had acquired a new importance in the Baltic in consequence of what had taken place; and that, come what might, the Empress could not be allowed to become supreme in seas which might be said to wash the eastern shores of the British isles. She would have attained that object but for Pitt.

The third direction in which the Balance of Power called for British intervention lay still nearer home. The summons was in fact the first in point of time; but

France and Russia, moved by wholly different impulses, acted so nearly together, and yet not without an eye to the facilities they afforded to each other by so acting, that events may be best grouped as we have presented them. That direction may be roughly designated as the British Channel.

A separate treatise might well be written on the traditional policy of England in reference to the defence of its southern shores, and the protection of the vessels which have for ages whitened with their sails the waters that carry its traffic to and from London. The difficulty would be to prevent its becoming a history of England. The chivalrous history of the Cinque Ports, the glorious history of the British navy, and the romantic history of the British fisheries and British commerce, would require to find their due proportion with the history of the growth of the other nations which border those waters, and of the policy which has throughout those ages been adopted towards them by England. Such a work, concisely written and properly illustrated, would be of the deepest value. It must be sufficient here to observe that the hostile relations between France and England, which have filled so large a portion of history, produced their natural correlative in the close alliance which has, with few and transient interruptions, existed for so many centuries between England and the Low Countries.

This was an alliance pointed out by Nature for the sake of mutual protection—an obvious alliance for

all purposes of offence and defence during the prolonged struggles of the Middle Ages.* So far, indeed, it might be a matter for statesmen, diplomatists, and warriors. It was much more than this. It was an alliance of two peoples, bound together by the necessities of supply and demand, by the possession of raw material on the one hand, of manufactures on the other, by inter-marriage and exchange of domicile, by the growth and the common leadership of commercial development. There was between the two even a tie of language—for there is no other so nearly English—and, after the Reformation, a very close connection through the forms of literary and religious progress which were common to both. How nearly they became one country in fact may be studied in the reign of Elizabeth; how much England owed to the transplantation of the royal stock to Holland, and the reception of it again in William III., will only be disputed by Jacobites, if there are any left; while the political importance of the alliance in the earlier Hanoverian reigns has been of late years brought before us by Ranke the historian. The interruptions of this continuous friendliness had been only such as were

* The following extract from a State paper drawn up by Sir James Harris, afterwards Lord Malmesbury, about this time, may be worth quoting. It was underlined in the original manuscript:—"The experience of more than three centuries, and the united opinion of the wisest Ministers, concur in proving the real importance of the Low Countries as a barrier. Its existence has ever been deemed essential to the interests of Europe in general, and to those of England in particular, but it is destroyed the moment the Low Countries belong to France directly, or are governed by a sovereign devoted to her influence." (*"Malmesbury Diaries,"* II., 104.)

inseparable from rival enterprise. No foes had ever proved themselves more worthy of British steel, as no seamen had ever exhibited more nearly the characteristics of our own. It can never be forgotten that it had at one time trembled in the balance which should rule the British seas.

If the different fortunes of the Spanish and Austrian Netherlands, now Belgium, have produced different relations in modern times, less intimate but more equably amicable, they have been scarcely less connected with British foreign policy, scarcely less jealously guarded as to their bearing on the safety of the British seas and the progress of British commerce. The Austrian alliance, one of the most intimate England has cherished throughout her history, was in later times as much associated with the ties existing between England and the Belgic Province, as with the services of the Empire in the larger interests of the Balance of Power.

Again, to modern politicians the immense importance formerly attached by the English to the possession of Calais and Dunkirk seems almost unaccountable. But the tenacity with which the first was retained long after the period had passed away when it was valued as the gate by which the English "Kings of France" might enter the territory which they claimed; and the place occupied in treaty after treaty, war after war, by the second, were both of them a part of the same consistent policy. It is often treated as a mere instance of English pride and

obstinacy. It was really a most politic State principle. It was all-important during the shifting alliances of Continental States that the English should have some *point d'appui* on the opposite side of the Channel from which to watch and control the designs of their enemies. In the absence of modern facilities of communication, the modern police of the seas, and the substitute which later times have provided in diplomacy—above all, before Hanover supplied the place of a British watchtower—no statesman could afford to overlook Dunkirk. We know what a mistake on that point cost the great Lord Clarendon.

But the special point which attracts our attention at this period of our survey is the withdrawal of the protection from France which, ever since the War of Succession, had been enjoyed by the Low Countries in the great barrier of fortified cities skirting their frontier. The wild scheme of the Emperor Joseph for exchanging Bavaria for the Netherlands, was already opening up a new and pressing danger. The work of centuries had been suddenly undone; and Holland, by the destruction of this barrier, was laid as completely open to an inundation of French invaders as she would have been to the ocean without her dykes. Could Great Britain allow the protection she had hitherto shared with her allies to vanish into the past? Were the whole of the coasts which fringe her seas to become the property of the Power with which she had waged

three deadly wars within the last three generations? This was the "British Channel question" which Pitt had to decide. Nor was it a merely theoretical question. It was actually being solved before his eyes in a very practical manner, and he could not evade it. It was still more pressing than the Eastern question, still more delicate than that of the Baltic.

Matters had come to a point in this way. While Russia was obeying the instinct of conquest and aggrandisement natural to the early stages of despotic barbarism, France, precisely at the same moment, was exhibiting the equally natural instinct of a very ancient community whose institutions had by no means kept pace with its growth. The seething caldron of the Revolution had not yet quite boiled over, but irregular movements were already painfully perceptible. The first of such movements by which the new democracy made its presence known to Europe was the open support it afforded to the sister democracy in Holland. Twice over in modern history had that glorious people made for their independence the greatest sacrifices ever recorded in history. Like the struggles of England, those efforts had played no small part in procuring the freedom of the world. They had proved beyond her strength. In spite of her material prosperity she had gradually sunk. As a great Power her glory had departed. Her internal struggles gave the finishing blow. She could no longer hold up her old invincible front

against the encroachments of her neighbour, now blandly approaching her under the guise of friend and liberator.

But whatever liberation was required in France, Holland had achieved her liberties two centuries before; and there existed an opposite faction in the State which preferred the freedom of the English connection to the wild democracy of the French invaders. It is necessary to premise as much as this; for, in the difficulty which exists in finding matter of accusation against the English for intervening in the internal affairs of their neighbours, this has often been seized upon as an instance. The truth is that intervention has never been a part of the traditional British policy, though some exceptions may have been noted in quite recent years. The party of the Stadtholder, the Orange Party, summoned Prussia and Great Britain to its aid, much as the Continental Protestants of the Sixteenth Century summoned Queen Elizabeth. Both the Powers which intervened happened to have dynastic as well as national interests, which afforded a sufficient impulse towards decisive action. Just at that time no resistance could well be offered. The French Revolution had not yet set free an armed nation. Though Holland lay like a vessel in the midst of gigantic icebergs, in danger of being crushed to pieces, she escaped for a few years more.

The obvious policy for Great Britain under all these dangers from East and West, from North and

South, was to revert once more to the traditional alliances with such of the Northern Powers of the Continent as were available for the purpose. The famous Triple Alliance of Sir William Temple—the one bright object on which the eye can rest in the reign of Charles the Second—was itself but a substitute for, or continuation of, former schemes of alliance; and, ever since the accession of the House of Brunswick, the necessities of Prussia, and its connection with Hanover, England, and Holland, had formed a bond of union of more or less strength between these States. There was little to do now, the Dutch Stadtholder having been restored to power, but to cement the union once more by a new Triple Alliance. Prussia was in as much danger by land, from the encroachments of France and Russia, as Great Britain was by sea. And soon Sweden was rash enough to attack Russia in the Baltic, with hostile Denmark all the while, itself a match for her, in the rear. In this she failed; the new alliance was her only safety. She also found admission.

The effect of this well-managed Alliance, old and yet new, was almost instantaneous, almost as decisive as in the days of Louis the Fourteenth. It was the nearest approach that could then be made to European concert. Considering that the most powerful nations of all were excluded from it, and indeed were the objects against which it was directed, it is one of the most striking events in political history that it should have fulfilled its purpose, through mere diplomatic

pressure, without war. It was indeed backed, as far as the countries in immediate contact were concerned, by the perfect readiness of the British to go to war about them—the only strength of diplomacy. The event showed that it was not so backed up as to the Mediterranean; and the interests of the world suffered accordingly.

The fact is that Pitt's diplomacy up to this point had been only too successful. Denmark and Austria had been detached from their alliance with Russia. It was felt to be an immense result. The wings of the Russian eagle had been so far clipped. But Holland being now safe, Pitt found that he had miscalculated the practical interest of the British in the further question of the East. If he and the King had been properly supported, the Empress would have found herself confronted, in the full flush of their diplomatic triumphs, by British fleets and by Polish and German armies, subsidized by British gold. Well matched in the field, and crippled at sea both in North and South, she could hardly have stood out. But the danger was as yet too remote, and too little understood in England. The "stitch in time" was not inserted. It cost France and England the Crimean War of our own day, at a far greater sacrifice, to undo the work of the Empress then left alone.

Pitt's alliances, however, had by no means altogether failed in their final issue. They did their work even here. Though Great Britain had drawn back, Russia, unsupported by Austria, and alarmed

at the outbreak of the French Revolution, with great sagacity, took little advantage of its military successes. This at least had been effected. The further partition of Turkey had been in reality warded off. The Peace of Jassy did little more than confirm that of Kainardji. But it was not till 1856 that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was asserted, that the Special Protectorate of Russia, enforced at Kainardji, came to an end, and that the collective guarantee of the European Powers was established as its substitute.* It would, however, be waste of space to speculate whether things might have been better. We are at present concerned with the Foreign Policy of Pitt.

That policy may now be summed up in comprehensive terms. It was to unite the principle of the defence and preservation of Great Britain, her Colonies, and her already world-wide commerce, with the old-established principles of International Law and the Balance of Power, which last name was, indeed, only another name for the first, viewed under another aspect. Such European concert as was possible had been skilfully obtained. The aggressions of three States of the first class, France, Russia, and Austria, had been checked without war. The invaluable security of the smaller States, which in previous European Settlements had been constituted

* See "A Lecture on the Treaty Relations of Russia and Turkey from 1774 to 1853," by T. E. Holland, Esq., Chichele Professor of International Law. 1877.

the barriers and bulwarks between their more powerful neighbours, had been restored as far as was still possible, or at least preserved from threatened injury. In the earlier years of George the Third those who were responsible for the use of European concert in maintaining public rights had not perceived, or had neglected, their duty. In the nine years of Pitt's brilliant administration the wholesome action of International principles had been once more triumphantly established.

One glance at the South-West of Europe will complete our rapid survey of this period. We have noticed the steady persistency of British policy which refused, all through the Eighteenth Century, to allow the two Mediterranean Peninsulas to be in the hands of the same Power. In connection with that policy we have noticed the inflexible resolution of the British (not always of their leading statesmen) first, to retain their hold upon Gibraltar, and, secondly, to establish a naval station at Minorca. The Family Compact of the House of Bourbon in France, Spain, and Italy, formed and renewed in spite of every precautionary effort—and when were more precautions taken?—had engraved this policy on the British mind at least as deeply as the loss of Calais impressed itself on that of the hapless Tudor Queen. For Great Britain it was vital to separate the vast maritime resources of France and Spain in the Mediterranean from those of France and Spain on the coasts of the Atlantic. The loss of Minorca at the Peace of Versailles had been deeply

felt. Twenty years were to elapse before the possession of Malta could supply that influence in Italy and Sicily which might afford a compensation.

Meanwhile it was necessary that the resources of Great Britain should always be available at a moment's notice to prevent the combination of the two great naval Powers. Even in the decay of Spain they might yet be a match for the young Empire of the Seas. There had lately been a most painful and distressing instance of this combination. Before Rodney's victories French and Spanish fleets had together sailed triumphant in the British Channel; and to so low a point was England reduced that it was thought a great thing to have prevented them from invading its shores. The fleet did not dare to engage them. No sufficient force could be mustered. After those victories a corresponding difference of tone is apparent enough. The days of Chatham had returned.

It fell to Pitt to uphold the honour of his country against Spain in the affair of Nootka Sound. It was almost an exact parallel with that of the Falkland Islands twenty years previously. In both cases alike, it was an attempt on the part of Spain to see how far she could go in the old direction of exclusion and intimidation. The distance from England, the trifling character of the subject of contention, the manifest wrong done by Spain, the presumption that she would be supported by France, were all very similar. So also was the treatment of the cases by this country.

War on such a question seemed absurd; yet the same unhesitating spirit was shown in the prompt exaction of reparation. Instant preparation for war, and a firm diplomacy, secured the neutrality of France, and brought Spain to reason. The world received a distinct intimation that there was to be no tampering with the respect due to the flag, which in the previous century had required, when a British man-of-war was met in British waters, that every other flag should be struck, and every topsail lowered.*

Besides the traditional policy in the Western Mediterranean, which so many ages of conflict with France and Spain had engendered, there was yet one more independent State with which British relations had become equally marked, and though not prominently affected by Pitt's Administration, it must be noticed. Portugal, with its chronic hostility to Spain, was, like Holland with its chronic hostility to France, the natural ally of the British. Its most conveniently situated sea-board, and its fine port of Lisbon, offered many advantages. Each nation had what the other wanted, and this fact, together with their common commercial interests at different periods, often leading them to unite against common enemies in distant seas, had created as strong a bond of union as was to be found between any two States of Europe. From the

* Amongst numerous instances one of the most remarkable is Sully's account of what happened to the ship in which he was taking a passage for England, on a mission to James the First, not the most warlike of monarchs. It was, however, shortly after the death of Elizabeth.

time when English knights helped the Portuguese to expel the Moors, this friendship had been almost uninterrupted. Wanting in the characteristics of intimacy which had signalised the relations of England to the Dutch, it had suffered less from hard blows. The Treaties with Portugal which were made by the Long Parliament, by Cromwell, and by Charles the Second, at his marriage with Catharine of Braganza, were only less advantageous to both countries than Queen Anne's Methuen Treaty, which was strictly an offensive and defensive compact. By that Treaty the Portuguese wines, imported in return for English wool, became the substitute to Englishmen for those of France. The generous assistance sent from England on the occasion of the great Earthquake of Lisbon, had kept alive the sense of obligation; and this, a little later, was still further strengthened by the aid of British troops, when Spain made one of her frequent attempts at subjugation. No one understood the value of the alliance better than the Marquis de Pombal, the one great Minister that country has produced; and it was no slight title to British confidence that, under his auspices, Portugal was the first country to expel the Jesuits.

These relations were too firmly established to be shaken by the momentary adhesion of Portugal to the Armed Neutrality, or by the abandonment of the commercial part of the Methuen Treaty which Pitt, in his pursuit of commercial equality with France

and other nations, found to be necessary. The value of friendly relations with Portugal was to be tested sooner than men supposed.

It was well for Great Britain that in this, as in other lines of policy, she had no new tactics to adopt. Her position was well understood. Nations knew very well where to find her as an ally or an enemy. She had merely strengthened and adapted to circumstances what experience had dictated. Genius and common sense, represented by Pitt and the King, having for once combined, she had advanced far beyond her neighbours in the development of all the resources necessary for interposition, if that should ever be needed. She could afford to wait, as she did wait, till every expedient had been tried before she plunged into the gigantic conflict which was to settle the question of her independence, to decide upon her future existence as an Empire.

CHAPTER V.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE WAR OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

THE Foreign Policy of Great Britain during the new period before us, a period of incessant war, is in reality more easy to describe than it has hitherto been; for the outlines of that policy remain precisely as they have been formulated in the last chapter, and the facts of the military history and diplomacy of the

time are still fresh. They are reducible to a very simple course of proceeding. From 1793 to 1815 there was but one master-object in view in the eyes of King or Prince, Ministers, or people—taking them in the mass; and this was to restrain the aggressive action of France, first in her frenzy, and then in her military ambition. The object was to be attained in concert with the other States of Europe; and yet the problem was to be solved of so co-operating as to prevent any of them from seizing that overwhelming supremacy which could not be permitted to France. In other words, it fell once more to the lot of Great Britain to be summoned to the front for the purpose of administering the International Law of Europe.

The call was explicit. It none the less represented the vital interests of Great Britain. On the one hand, the most genuine abhorrence was felt of the principles which issued in the horrors of the French Revolution; the deepest sympathy warmed the hearts of the British people for the cause of the oppressed nations which, one after the other, fell under the French yoke. On the other hand, the conviction that in fighting for others the British were also fighting for themselves, nerved every arm and lightened every sacrifice. The movement, which never really lost its first impulse, was neither selfish nor Quixotic. It was the dictate of judgment as well as feeling, of common sense as well as philanthropy.

As we cannot ignore this mixture of motives, so we cannot, even in sketching a policy, refuse to

notice the questions, which are still rife, as to the essential justice of the part taken by this country in joining the Continental movement against Republican France. That course once commenced, many who blame the first step admit, nevertheless, that a proper moment to stop was never afforded. Others, believing the war to have been originally necessary, condemn the obstinacy which refused to make peace when it was possible so to do. How immense, either way, was the responsibility of those who guided the destinies of Great Britain at this supremely critical moment! And how important that we should attempt to arrive at a just conclusion as to their conduct, viewing it neither through the coloured glasses of partisan histories, nor yet from the exclusively English stand-point, regardless of the more general aspects of the case! Still less ought we to rely upon the merely superficial considerations which are sometimes supposed to exhaust the whole subject in branding, as self-condemned, the very idea of opposition to the struggle of the oppressed French people against feudal tyranny. If, as some affirm, the great preponderance of British opinion is still to be found in accordance with this rough-and-ready verdict, it is high time that some of the numerous writers who of late years have been candid enough, though avowedly of the "Liberal" school, to justify the action of Great Britain, should have a proper hearing.

Naturally enough, the leaders of public opinion at the Reform Bill period (to whom some reference

has already been made) eagerly accepted the doctrines of Fox and his small band of followers, and especially their admiration of the French Revolution. The time had come round for one of those great changes of thought which periodically recur. The intense and prolonged war-struggle had not long been concluded; and while the war lasted this phase of opinion had enjoyed very little credit. But now, what had been in truth the voice of the nation, had become identified with the subsequent unpopularity of the Tories, the later part of whose political history had not added to their renown. Constant repetition, most copious reproduction in all sorts of popular forms, by a school of brilliant writers, produced their invariable effect upon the broader subject, just as we have seen that they influenced the narrower one—the estimate of the character of the King. For many years the wind now blew all one way. If the merits of those concerned in bringing about and lauding to the skies the French Revolution had been so long obscured, if so many neglected truths had now come to be understood at last, was it not plain that the resistance which the people of England had been so long engaged in making was a mistake from beginning to end? What millions had been squandered for nothing! What a cause, for the sake of which such an enormous debt had been incurred—never to be shaken off! To support any other view was for a long term of years heresy.

The publication of Lord Stanhope's "Life of

William Pitt" (in 1861) may, roughly speaking, be assumed as the landmark of a gradual return from this prevailing state of the national mind. Certainly, a more impartial estimate of the period in question has been gaining ground ever since. Not that we are likely to find ourselves swept back again to the warm latitudes of those former years of conflict. Removed by some generations from the heat of the strife, and having learnt much from past controversy, we can view events through a less distorted medium, and make allowances which would have shocked the glowing, irreconcilable imagination of Edmund Burke.

To fortify the above statement as to the present condition of historical opinion, it will only be necessary to refer to three recent authors—to Mr. Massey, whose "History" has found great acceptance; to Mr. J. F. Bright, who addresses himself to Public Schools; and to Mr. Green, the title of whose book and its success suggest an appeal to the "people." Their works sell well. Their political opinions are to be traced with sufficient clearness. And yet they have all given in their unqualified adhesion to the opinion that the War of the French Revolution was forced upon Great Britain, not only by the French having taken the initiative in declaring war, but by the very nature of the French Revolution, as it presented itself in 1792 and 1793. A few passages from the first of these authors may be taken as sufficient:—

"The war in which England became thus involved was unlike any former war in which any civilized Power had been

hitherto engaged. It was not a war of ambition, of defence, or of national rivalry; . . . there was no question of Balance of Power; . . . our ancient rival was no more; . . . the House of Bourbon was levelled with the dust; . . . but in its place had arisen a Power more terrible than the French Monarchy at the height of its insolence and vigour; a country without a Government, denouncing all regular Governments, dispersing the missionaries of anarchy throughout Europe, and inviting all nations to cashier rulers, to level society, to confiscate property—in a word, to dissolve all bonds by which civilized communities had hitherto been held together. Such was France, and France had declared war against England. The immediate cause of war was complete in itself, and must have led to a rupture had it been the act of Louis the Sixteenth and a regular Government. England was bound by a Treaty with Holland so late as the year 1788. . . . It had indeed already become manifest that the time had arrived when England, unless prepared to submit to the last indignity, must accept the quarrel which the rulers of France had determined to fasten upon her. The outrageous decree of November 19 [1792], which was all but avowedly directed against this country; the act of December 15, annexing the Austrian Netherlands to France, a measure which however justifiable by the laws of war, was most dangerous to the peace and safety of these islands; and lastly, the open breach of a Treaty to which the honour of England was pledged, formed a combination of insults which no independent nation could endure. There was indeed no substantial difference of opinion on the subject among Englishmen who did not hate the institutions under which they lived, or were not desirous that their country should become a province of France.”*

Let us contrast the unhesitating character of these remarks with Lord Brougham’s attempt, in a very popular work, a quarter of a century earlier, to saddle Pitt with the whole responsibility of the war, which he adopted, forsooth, in order to increase and re-

* “History of England,” &c. (1863), Vol. IV., 1—5.

tain his superiority over his political opponents! This he connects with the "commonplace" character of his war policy, and with a refusal to allow him the least part of the credit due for the successes of the British Navy. Characteristically, even the merits of the great statesman's preceding Peace-Administration are equally denied. With the exception of "the Union with Ireland, which was forced on him by a rebellion, he has not left a single measure behind him for which the community whose destinies he so long swayed has any reason to respect his memory." We have already met these latter statements by facts. Let us now quote a more modern authority than Lord Brougham on the charge against Pitt for his share in bringing on the war. Of his unwavering firmness at the very outset in the policy of neutrality and peace, Von Sybel truly tells us that—

"it is hardly necessary at the present day to bring proofs. All the official documents, correspondence, and despatches of the Powers and statesmen concerned, go to prove the correctness of this view of Pitt's conduct, while his opponents have not the least shadow of testimony to bring forward."

And, again, as to the progress of the war:—

"The man whom a narrow party spirit has been accustomed to regard as the originator of all the Coalitions against France, was incessantly using his influence with the Powers to bring the contest to an end."*

There is no occasion to multiply quotations. If it be true that opinion is still against England on this

* "French Revolution," II., 252.

subject, the belief at all 'general that she could have kept out of this war, it can scarcely be the opinion of well-informed people.

Perhaps, the case may appear still more clear if we bear in mind what has been said as to the traditional British interest in Holland and the Austrian Netherlands. If the occupation of those territories by the French, with such a war-port as Antwerp and such a commercial centre as Amsterdam at their disposal, had been a matter of indifference to Great Britain, it is conceivable, though scarcely possible, that the allowance due to a people frenzied with their sanguinary success in overturning an effete, corrupt, and oppressive system of government, might have counselled even still greater patience than was exhibited. But, calm as Pitt held his lofty head above the storm, he knew too well the vital nature of the issue on this one point alone.

To Pitt, indeed, everything in the world cried out against the war. For more than three years he had guided the country through the extreme excitement produced by the dreadful scenes passing in France. At every pause of the terrible drama his voice was to be heard loudly proclaiming non-interference. He positively refused to join the Allied Powers at Pilnitz. In a hundred ways he proved his sincerity. There was every reason for it in the eye of a statesman. Was not Russia taking advantage of the paralysis of Western Europe to complete the absorption of Poland? Was

this a time to assist in destroying the weight which France should afford to the balance? There was every reason for it in the eye of the philanthropist. What torture to the successful financier and administrator to find all his plans for the peaceful development of British resources brought forcibly to an untimely end! We now know the struggle it cost him to renounce the whole object of his life. But he would have had to relinquish every shred of the political inheritance entrusted to him, every particle of the foreign policy he had himself emblazoned to the world, had he shut his eyes to the seizure of Holland.

The case, then, is even stronger than it is put by Mr. Massey. It is not only a question of which country first declared war. Of this there is no doubt, and in practice the French Declaration of War was enough. It is not only a question of interference in the affairs of a neighbour; and yet the French interference in British affairs left no alternative. It was not only a war of "armed opinion," Pitt's own expression at a later date,* though this was of itself sufficient justification. The action of Great Britain must be judged from the side of strategy and self-defence, of International Law and national independence. If we may recur to

* "We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet nor the speculations of the schools. We are at war with armed opinions. Their appearance in arms changed their character, and we will not leave the monster to prowl the world unopposed." (Speech in reply to Tierney, 1799.)

what has been already laid down—to permit the French occupation of Holland as well as Belgium was absolutely impossible. To the last as a separate proposal Pitt had, indeed, in the presence of the dangerous advance of Russia, already listened—he could not have carried the country with him. But to allow the occupation of both by a State which, whether professedly hostile or not, held the whole of the Southern Coasts of the British Channel, the Bay of Biscay, and the Gulf of Lyons, was nothing more or less than to place a rope round the British neck, and to hand the end of it over to those who were only too ready to do the rest. It was to give up a thousand years of history; to make a present to France of the thousands of lives, the millions of money, and the innumerable obligations incurred in building up the Empire. It was to open up a frightful future of war, with every disadvantage of place and time, with diminished resources, and a sense of paying dear for a momentary infatuation. Better to take the dreadful plunge at once into the old state of war, subsidies, and alliances, with all its unknown future of debt, distress, and sedition, than attempt to assume the attitude of affected insular indifference, false to every tie of honour and policy, and laden with the heavy certainty of future retribution.

Such were the convictions of the statesmen who, with the King, and the vast mass of the nation at their back, made at last, not one day before it was

necessary, the momentous decision to stand by the old English policy, and thus to bring on the Declaration of War which France was only too ready to make.

But it may well be doubted whether, even supposing such solid considerations had been wanting, any effort of Pitt could have restrained the British people from the war. And here we are drawn at once within the sphere of attraction of the great ruler of English political thought, whose care-worn life seemed to have been prolonged for the express purpose of its influence at this crisis. When their patience was exhausted, the Government might, on the grounds of honour, safety, and policy, have led with them into the war a majority of the nation. It was due to Burke that they took up nearly the whole respectable portion of it. It was Burke who gave at the outset that impulse which was forcible enough to survive all failures and disasters, all attempts to patch up a hollow peace. It was the impression he had made which supported the self-sacrificing resistance of Great Britain when she stood alone, as she had stood before, against a world in arms. It lasted till the day came when she, with all Europe, at last reaped her reward.

Burke stands on a different pedestal from that of any other statesman of this long reign. Others affected portions of it, he the whole. The Pitts, father and son, each had his part; Burke spanned the interval as well. He had his faults and in-

firmities ; but he had the merit of holding his political faith consistently through the whole of his career. During the long process of the American struggle, in the Constitutional conflict with Wilkes, on most questions of domestic reform, and at the crisis of the French Revolution, he proudly vindicated his position as the representative of the "Old Whigs," the party of the Revolution of 1688. As such he broke up the incoherent Whig party of 1791, carrying off the bulk of them, and leaving Fox and Sheridan almost alone to represent the admirers of the French Revolution and the opponents of the war. To his immortal Works on this subject we turn for the principles around which the nation rallied.

In this place, of course, a passing reference to these Works is alone possible. They are amongst the best inheritances of Englishmen, and are, happily, familiar to all. Making allowance for the vein of exaggeration which pervades them, and the poetical haze through which the fervid orator views the merits of the British, and the demerits of the French system of government, even those who refuse to succumb to the wand of the enchanter must acknowledge the many splendid political lessons conveyed in these writings. Even if they scruple to allow them the elevated place claimed by Burke's admirers, they will at least perceive their marvellous fitness as an antidote to the virtual Communism which was propagated, like so much poison, from Paris. It was no time for tame disquisition. No one would have listened to it. It

was the matchless beauty of the style, the splendid illustration, the fervid declamation, which carried all before it, and yet attracted men in such a way that they were forced to read it again and again. The enthusiasm of the "missionaries of sedition," loudly summoning all nations to insurrection, and most of all the British, required to be met by the enthusiasm, equal to their own, of the High Priest of the British Constitution. The movement which "proclaimed its unfitness for its mission by declaring war against all moral laws, which substituted the word 'plunder' for freedom of trade, and persecution of the upper classes for universal equality,"* required to be met by the re-assertion, in tones which men must hear, of the eternal principles of morality and religion, of order and true freedom.

Thirty editions of Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution," printed off as fast as one edition could follow another, attested the public demand, and enrolled British society of all classes against the aggressor, as around some visible banner. It required but the last scene of the first Act, the supremacy of the "Mountain," exhibited in the murder of the King, to silence, and for the moment bear down, all opposition to the war which now burst forth.

To conclude this part of our subject, we may well, at this distance of time, indulge the wish that it had been possible to let the French people work out their

* Von Sybel, II., 196, 197.

own Revolution as England had previously worked out hers. There was, indeed, no similarity between the two Revolutions, except that in both cases a king was beheaded, and that a despot mounted to his place on the shoulders of the army which he had formed. The circumstances, as they affected other States than that in which the Revolution occurred, were perfectly different. But even if this were not so, is it candid to allow such a sentiment to influence our judgment on the conduct of the British nation in the crisis of 1793? Must we not honestly attempt to measure the real forces which ruled the decision? It is, at any rate, something to get sight of the facts from the point of view in which Pitt was himself obliged to regard them at last, that of the ancient, traditional, well-tested policy of Great Britain.

We may now proceed another step. If the war was a righteous war, was every opportunity seized, after its commencement, of bringing it to a conclusion? This is by no means so generally admitted, even by recent writers. Nor can it be dealt with here without a mass of detail which would be quite out of place. It may be just of some use to say that the English writers who hold that Pitt was not sufficiently in earnest at Paris and at Lille, must settle their differences with the Continental writers of the time, who professed to account for the too great readiness of England to make peace by the success which she had attained in depriving the Dutch of their commerce.

The case, however, admits of a broader treatment, and in a very few words. The fact is that, just as in all similar conflicts, it is the first step which is really significant. When once the complicated interests of the various allies on either side are thoroughly involved, peace becomes impossible till one side is thoroughly beaten. Pitt's finance, resting on the rapid manufacturing and commercial development of his country, supplied almost inexhaustible funds for the war; and, when the Coalitions which he summoned to his help shrank back after disaster, the equally inexhaustible military spirit of the French, drawing resources from their successful campaigns, renewed the conflict with the beaten States by supplying them in their turn with the courage of despair. At one time the restoration of the Austrian Netherlands was the difficulty in the way of peace; at another, Great Britain, in order to secure a peace, offered to resign many of her conquests; but then the French were in too prosperous a condition to make any negotiation successful. When Napoleon came to the head of affairs, he at once proposed terms; but then the English were in no humour to grant what seemed, even to the warmest English advocates of peace, a mere device to gain time. When both sides were sufficiently exhausted, the Peace of Amiens was quite understood by all reflecting persons to be only a necessary truce till each side had regained its breath.

Meanwhile, taking a general view of the war, it is easy to trace in its progress the outlines of

British policy already marked out in previous years.

And first, as to the instruments at Pitt's command, a subject on which a good deal of misapprehension has arisen from the want of observing a few simple facts which all must admit as soon as stated. It has been already said that, because Pitt's military combinations were often unsuccessful, he is pronounced an incompetent war-minister; and this in spite of the success of the Navy for which he is denied the credit. The truer view is that he deserves to be ranked but little below his father in the skilful employment of such means as were at his disposal. In other words, the error of the estimate too often formed may be traced to the confusion of thought which leads people to compare two different things as if they were the same, or rather, to refuse to balance against one another, because they have not the same name, the two things which ought to be balanced.

The generals and armies of Great Britain could not possibly, in those days, be a match for Continental generals and armies till they had acquired an amount of experience in war under approved masters which an insular State, with a very small standing army, did not easily afford. But the circumstances of the French Revolution, on the contrary, produced almost at once a nation of soldiers, of whom the very best came to the surface. Even they failed just at first; but necessity was the stern teacher which elevated them, almost at a bound, to the first rank of military nations.

The British army and the British generals had to be absolutely made afresh, to learn in small sections, to learn slowly. They were hampered by a multitude of traditional impediments, by what soldiers call "pipeclay," and civilians "red tape;" above all, by the imperative rule which then obtained of employing members of the Royal Family in the field before they had been trained to their duty and had evinced their knowledge of it by exactly the same apprenticeship as other officers. It was then supposed there was a royal road to generalship. The standard being thus stunted, it was all the more credit to Sir Ralph Abercromby, Sir John Moore, and Sir Arthur Wellesley, that they—for it was chiefly their work, assisted at headquarters by the Duke of York—gradually succeeded in raising it to a higher level; and that at last, after years of failure, having the same excellent British material as ever to work upon, they produced both a school of officers who proved themselves in the end the equals of their brethren at sea and not inferior to the French marshals, and a body of troops who "could go anywhere and do anything." Then also, towering far above them all, came to the front the man who had been the chief agent in the process, and who, alone in Europe, could be matched with the great Napoleon.

In Pitt's time the true objects of comparison are the soldiers of France and the sailors of Britain. The splendid generals who led the Republican hosts to victory were the direct product of a sifting out of the

ablest and bravest men from millions. The great admirals of England were the result of pretty nearly the same process. Out of a nation of seamen trained by constant practice, and at the highest standard of spirit and efficiency, the very best men achieved the reputation which brought them to the head of the service. The School of Hawke had produced a Rodney and a Howe; and under them and their gallant companions a generation of excellent officers had sprung forth, consummately prepared for the work which lay before them. After the decisive victory in the West Indies, when Rodney received on board his flagship as his prisoner that fine French admiral, the Count de Grasse, the latter remarked, with equal truth and courtesy, that "the English were a hundred years in advance of the French in naval matters." * It may well be doubted whether Hoche, Pichegru, Moreau, Jourdan, Massena, Augereau, Kleber, Dessaix, were greater on land than Howe, Bridport, Hood, Jervis, Duncan, Collingwood, at sea. The generals at once found their greatness culminate in Napoleon, the admirals in Nelson. The French could not create a navy or admirals like these; for seamen and admirals cannot be made in a few years; and the same Revolution which made their armies for a time supreme, destroyed the most respectable element of their navy; while British victories soon annihilated what was left. Just in the same way a British army could not be

* Mundy's "Life of Rodney," II., 290.

formed at once. Happily, the blows it received during the process were not strong enough to annihilate it. Happily, it found at last a man who could weld it together, and a sphere in which it could operate. Who but must admit these obvious facts?

Pitt's tactics against France and her Allies, like those of Chatham, consisted in Continental Coalitions (on a larger scale), and in military descents on the French Coast; while the Baltic and the Mediterranean were to be kept open at all hazards for British commerce, and the more distant resources of the enemy to be crippled by every possible means. Of all these operations, it was the descents on the French Coast which chiefly damaged the reputation of his strategy. They were failures; but they were scarcely more unsuccessful than the huge armies of the Allies, and they were fatally hampered by the difficulties which, in their very nature, beset all co-operation with the French Royalists. And yet these expeditions were the natural policy of the insular State, the bulk of whose maritime forces had to be retained for the defence of its shores, and were therefore at hand for these services; and how could a Minister refuse the assistance of the French Royalists till they had proved their incompetence?

Nor were these descents by any means useless as a means of drawing off French armies from combination with their other forces already more than a match for the Coalitions. Still further, it

should be remembered that both Pitts, father and son, reaped important results from their failures, though the younger died before he saw the fruit. The elder Pitt found out at last the vulnerable point of his foe. At the Peace of Paris it was the capture of Belleisle which enabled the British to obtain advantages sufficiently great to afford them the opportunity for a display of genuine moderation. The son's persistent efforts to find a rallying-point for the enemies of the aggressive Republic led at last to the selection of Portugal, the spot at which the lever was applied by which the new Archimedes moved the world.

Not one of these considerations finds a place in Lord Macaulay's well-known sketch of William Pitt, published in his "Miscellaneous Works." No allowance is made for the peculiar nature of the French military enthusiasm, itself a force equal to many armies; nor, when Napoleon came on the stage, for the immeasurable superiority of his genius over that of all ordinary warriors. Pitt was often unsuccessful; therefore "in his military administration he was a driveller." Richelieu, Louvois, Chatham, or Wellesley, would "in a few months have discovered and brought forward generals worthy to command" such armies as Pitt might have raised. What wilder imagination could any writer indulge in? Chatham was never matched against such odds; and he only learnt by failures. The other cases are quite irrelevant. Who can say what any of

these men would have done against such a nation and such a general?

We may still further notice the obstinate difficulties in which the holder of such views finds himself involved. They are well illustrated in this brilliant essay—a specimen in itself of nervous English, which is thought good enough to be cut up into pieces for schoolboy translation into classical languages. How could a “driveller” contrive to carry a whole people with him, not once or twice, but year after year? How was he to attract such implicit confidence that failures seemed rather to increase than diminish his power and influence? Macaulay is driven, in order to account for such a result, to ascribe the most marvellous effects to the oratory of the Minister, and to depreciate in proportion the good sense of Parliament and people. We are introduced to miracle in order to support paradox.

The course of affairs is simple enough if we only accept the natural solution. The consummate Minister in peace, the inheritor of more than Chatham’s talents, was no “driveller” in war. The nation perfectly well understood that he made the best use of the imperfect instruments, the wretched information, and the few opportunities, at his disposal; and it saw no reason to suppose that any one else within the bounds of the four seas could have made any better use of them. Still more, it was scarcely thought of in those days, and has been a mere modern after-

thought, that the glories of the British Navy reflected no credit on the responsible Minister. His influence on the achievements of the great admirals was only less direct than that of Chatham, because the organization of the Admiralty was already infinitely superior. Pitt was thoroughly well seconded at Whitehall; but it was his own dauntless spirit which infused itself into all subordinates, and naturally bore fruit earliest where the soil was best prepared. If he was over-matched on land, there was nothing for it but (to use the phrase which General Grant has made classical)—to go on “pegging away.”

From our present point of view, it is the most noticeable feature of this war that the Mediterranean acquired an importance for Great Britain before unknown. Though but the natural development of preceding relations with England, it now became a sphere of military and naval operations only second to the British Channel. As such it has remained to this day. We must linger for a moment over the process by which it became so.

The French fleets having been partly destroyed at Toulon by Lord Hood, the rest defeated by Lord Howe, the Spanish fleet defeated by Jervis, and another French fleet by Nelson, the Mediterranean was left for the first time under the exclusive domination of the British. The national troops could now be transported from one place to another in almost as great security as in the Channel. Sicily took for the time the position which Minorca had been in-

tended to fill, and which was gained at last in Malta—that of a central rendezvous; while Turkey, with its Egyptian province, already saved by Pitt, and now doubly important in its relation to India, was more than ever thrown into the arms of England by the infatuated policy of Napoleon. That the significance of the Levant as the high road to British possessions in the East was thoroughly understood on all sides, is proved quite as much by the young conqueror's expedition to Egypt and Syria, as by the subsequent co-operation of Sir David Baird and his Sepoys with the British forces. Napoleon's expedition had broken up the oldest alliance then existing in Europe, that between France and the Porte. Great Britain stepped into the vacant place, which indeed she had already almost filled. In more modern times both countries, repenting of old errors, have with equal clearness perceived, in the weakness of their old ally and the danger to themselves from her destruction, the necessity for armed interference in her support.

It was thus that the difficulty which Pitt had experienced in bringing the Eastern Question home to his countrymen in 1790 received a practical solution. By the supremacy now obtained in the Mediterranean the British dominions had, in a sense, become continuous with those of Russia. The championship of Turkey, along with the supervision of Turkish relations to Greece, Syria, and Egypt, became, by the mere force of events, the special charge of the

dominant naval Power. Henceforth, also, the relations of the Porte with other independent States became virtually British relations, and were always most jealously watched. The affair of 1807, and the "untoward event" of 1829, were only precursors of more sagacious and more successful interferences at later dates. The matter could not be let alone. It became, like the connection with the Low Countries, a traditional obligation acknowledged in all changes of administration. It was the product of a long past, and has perhaps a long future before it. How absurd to speak of the British connection with the Eastern Question of to-day as a thing which it is possible to take up or drop! It has been taken up: Europe is a part of it.

To turn once more to the North, and to the "Armed Neutrality." The relations of Great Britain to the Baltic Powers, in the war of the French Revolution, were necessarily guided by the part they took in reference to the maritime principles laid down by Russia in 1780. Again those principles assumed a menacing prominence, but with this important difference: France and Great Britain now vied with each other in claiming to act, each for its own benefit, on the old rigid system against which Russia had formerly combined the neutral States, while Russia itself, for good reasons, had withdrawn its opposition. Under such circumstances the other Powers were not strong enough to resist; and the British, having destroyed the Dutch naval power when it enlisted itself on the

side of their enemies—and how could they do otherwise?—used their supremacy at will. There was some rough justice as well as strict right on their side. The Power that paid all on land and fought all at sea might well claim to reap the benefit of the aggrandised commerce by which alone she was enabled to perform her part. So only could she direct the conflict. So only could she expect to starve her implacable foe into submission.

When, however, the Russian policy was for a moment, under the great Empress's mad successor, reversed; when the Armed Neutrality once more gathered formidable head, and the Baltic was closed, Great Britain interfered promptly, and with all her force. The destruction of the Danish fleet was just about to be followed up by Nelson by an attack on Russia, when Paul was assassinated, and the cloud dispersed. With as much sagacity as promptitude, Pitt now perceived that the time had come when he could afford to make the concessions required by the growing commerce of the world. Those concessions have formed the basis of the arrangements which have been carried further in our own day. Thus the old policy of England towards the Northern System of States was renewed. It was more spirited, but it was the same. The Northern Seas were kept free; the British shores were effectually secured from any combination which might be formed on their eastern flank.

The portion of the British foreign policy which Pitt could not succeed in establishing during war as

he had done in peace, was the inviolability of the Low Countries. It was not for want of perseverance and determined effort. Hanover also fell in the general crash. How serious a danger was thus opened up, appeared when the war broke out afresh at the rupture of the Peace of Amiens. It was necessary to bend to the storm. When it passed away, that inviolability was the one point of defence, never lost sight of, which of all others was placed in the most carefully guarded security by Pitt's successors.

If the collateral events of this momentous period, each of which has its bearing on the general subject, are passed over, it is for fear of obscuring the main issue. Of Ireland scarce anything need be said. The absolutely vital necessity of the Union had been long foreseen by Pitt. It was now forced upon him partly by the use which France was making of Irish difficulties, partly by the existence of an Irish Parliament at issue with the English, partly by the aspirations of too many of the Irish themselves for an independence which has always been held by the larger island to be entirely inconsistent with its own safety. The first condition for a foreign policy which could maintain Great Britain in security was the indivisibility of the British Islands; and, at all hazards, that question had to be settled once and for ever. That methods equally wise with the Union were not always adopted for this purpose may well be lamented.

Nor may India detain us long; though the principles on which this newly-acquired portion of the

Empire were to be governed formed the great problem of the day. It was already exercising an influence upon English affairs which betokened for a time the shifting of the centre of gravity of Imperial interests towards the East. The rapid consolidation of these Indian possessions since the exclusion of European rivalry; the vast annexations, some unworthily acquired, but for the most part forced on successive Governments (the inevitable consequence of forming trade-settlements in the midst of worn-out, incoherent populations); the strangeness, the mystery of these unknown regions, with their ancient civilisation and teeming populations; the fabulous fortunes brought home by individuals, the careers opened for adventure, the relations which were developed from India as a centre with China and other regions—all these took captive the English mind, and made themselves felt amidst the crash of falling thrones and the shock of nations in arms. It was the wrongs of India which inspired the eloquence of Burke and Sheridan. Warren Hastings' grand but unscrupulous career was for some time the leading subject of British interest. It was on an Indian Bill that Fox was wrecked. It was by his Indian Bill, which supplanted it, that Pitt justified men's hopes of his statesmanship. The young military genius of Wellington was nursed in India. There also came to light the great powers for administration possessed by his only less famous brother.

But the mention of Ireland and of India suggests the name of one who has left his mark on the history of both, more distinctly than any other statesman, and yet is already almost forgotten.

Lord Cornwallis, though he might possibly be omitted in this sketch, as one of those who, after all, only took a part in executing what was designed by others, is nevertheless the single exception that must be made. Nor will it be thought an arbitrary exception if we remember that he was a truly representative Englishman, not of the highest or most showy kind of intellect, but of that thoroughly capable, trustworthy, self-sacrificing, and devoted character which marks men out for the management of the most arduous undertakings. As a soldier, he is chiefly remembered for the famous surrender to Washington which virtually brought the American War to an end; but, as it was certainly not his fault, the high reputation he had already obtained did not suffer. It was he who immediately afterwards had been destined to fill the place of Warren Hastings when it was first seen that the latter must be recalled from India; and, when Pitt's India Bill passed, it was he to whom the working of the new system was entrusted amidst the extraordinary difficulties which called for adjustment. His judicial, territorial, social, and administrative settlements have been the basis of all subsequent government. It was owing to his wise and upright conduct of affairs, prolonged for nine years,

that the natives—princes and people alike—learnt to trust the British, to feel themselves a part of the Empire. Under him the European officials were taught by slow degrees the lesson that justice and probity were to be required of them as well in India as at home, and European soldiers that discipline was to be no less rigidly exacted. It was his example of temperance, industry, and straightforward honesty, which elevated the whole standard of Indian society. It was his courage and generalship that first subdued the threatening power of Tippoo Saib at a critical moment for British supremacy. Later on, after his return, when it was feared that Wellesley's fine policy of a subsidiary system of States, however wise, was yet too rapid for public opinion, and perhaps dangerous while so much power was left in the hands of the Company, it was Cornwallis who was twice over* appointed Governor-General, to satisfy the country. It was there, in the execution of his duty, that he paid the forfeit of his life.

* Lord Cornwallis did not go out upon his second appointment. Perhaps, the sentence which best expresses the merits of his first Indian Administration may be found in the Works of a kindred mind, that of Sir John Malcolm. It is as follows:—"To a dignified simplicity of character Lord Cornwallis added a soundness of understanding and a strength of judgment which admirably fitted him for the exercise of both civil and military power; and his first Administration of the British Empire in India must ever be a theme of just and unqualified admiration." (*"Political History of India,"* I., 355.) But his published "Correspondence" is a sufficient monument. Even his second Administration might have worn a very different aspect had he only lived to carry through that policy of conciliation which nothing but his own extraordinary reputation in India could have made successful.

Between these periods Cornwallis had been selected for the responsible service of quelling the rebellion of the Irish and defeating their French allies. This task skilfully performed, he was then invested with supreme authority to carry out the Union. The ability, the humanity, the enlarged liberality of his conduct on this occasion are to be traced in every account of those transactions, and almost from all quarters of opinion. Finally, it was to Cornwallis, whom Pitt had originally intended for his general in the Low Countries (when the King unfortunately insisted on appointing the Duke of York), that the interests of his country were entrusted as Plenipotentiary at the Peace of Amiens. Such a list of high offices admirably performed is rare indeed. Among the class of "great subjects" of the Crown, of whom Marlborough and Wellington are the highest representatives in British history, unapproachable in their effect on the history of the world, there will not be found many, if any, who so nearly reach their level as this wise and good man. Wilberforce expressed the general sense of the country when he classed Cornwallis with Nelson and Pitt, all dying close together, as "three of the most high-minded servants a State ever had." *

It is unnecessary to illustrate this sketch by the discussion of the Peace, or rather Truce of Amiens.

* "Life of Wilberforce," 1st Edition, in five volumes. This remark does not appear in the abridged Life published by Bishop Wilberforce.

It is more to our purpose to remark that the Peace broke up after little more than a year, on the question of Malta, which had now taken its place as the central point of British foreign policy. Napoleon perceived the fact as clearly as the British people. To the latter, led by a natural instinct, it had already begun to share with Gibraltar the place which Calais and Dunkirk had held in earlier days. To the former it seemed so precious that he publicly declared he should prefer to see the English in possession of the Faubourg St. Antoine. It may further be observed that the time has gone by when candid English writers found it necessary to condemn their country for the part it took in this matter. The resistance to Napoleon as a whole is now no more clearly seen to have been the righteous duty of Great Britain, than the resistance displayed on this particular point. None of the stipulated guarantees for the independence of the island had been obtained; yet these guarantees had alone been held to justify its cession. Why should Great Britain step out of its stronghold simply to let France step in? It had never dreamt of such a thing. What need of further argument?

Having reached this point, let us pause for a moment to observe how unique in the history of the world had now become the relations of the mother country to her extended empire. Other countries had planted themselves in East or West, but none lay so evenly balanced between both. Venice and

Holland had at different times, in their distress, all but moved their seat of Government to their Eastern dominions. Portugal founded an Empire of Brazil, which is, perhaps, yet destined to have a future. Spain, by the loss of her chief colonies, as well as of her naval power, offers no parallel.

It was the peculiar nature of the British Colonies in the West which really distinguished them from all others. While other nations, and the British elsewhere, had only formed fixed centres of settlement for mining and trading purposes, these alone, almost from the very first, have been the receivers of a continuous, steady, progressive migration. This incessant influx enabled them not only to dominate the Western coast of the Atlantic, but to settle and people the Continent. Thus, though taking up accretions from other peoples also, the United States and British America gradually became nothing more or less than another branch of the British people, separated by the ocean. Hence, while at the same time the West India Islands were becoming annually more valuable as the rivalry of other European nations was overcome, the Western interests restored the balance which appeared to incline towards the East, and became, in spite of the growing importance of the latter, at least equally strong.

And just in the same way, later still, as the Cape Colonies, Australia, and New Zealand gradually afforded new homes for the British race

in the South and East, so the growth of the Dominion of Canada has of late years marched along with them in the North and West. These main features of peculiarity, now, it is true, so much more largely developed, were sufficiently remarkable under Pitt.

Surely this was an Empire worth calling upon posterity to aid in preserving! Its variety, extent, and the mutual compensations and uses of its various parts, were an inheritance which no one could doubt that future generations would be grateful to their ancestors for building up and passing down to them. It already embraced and occupied all classes of society; it represented their fortunes; it carried with it their destiny; it provided for the fundamental changes which had taken place in the species of labour and means of subsistence of a rapidly growing population; it appealed to the history of the past, the enterprise of the present, the imagination of the future. Not that the nation was conscious of acting on these ideas, nor were very many even of its great men. It was enough for them that they had a plain and simple course to follow. And, indeed, as we have seen, they had no choice but to follow it.

And what was the system of Government which, as soon as they were fitted to receive it, was to bind the various parts of the Empire together, and to the mother country? This also is due to Pitt's administration, and a few words on it may close the period. On the foundations laid for the Govern-

ment of Canada in 1774, already noticed, he built, in 1791, the Constitutional fabric which, it is not too much to say, appears to gather strength as the ages roll on. From the British model, transplanted, with the necessary modifications, to Canada, have been propagated the fruitful seeds which are now the flourishing Constitutions of many noble settlements. It is impossible to overrate the importance of this step. The mixture of government by Nomination in one House and by Representation in another, with a Governor over all, appointed by and responsible to the Government at home, was the happy compound of sovereignty, aristocracy, and democracy, of which the ancients were always in vain search, and which moderns have found nowhere but in Great Britain.

It is also important to notice that the commencement of this Constitutional system, like that of the Settlement of India by Pitt and Cornwallis, was no chance, obscure policy of which the people knew nothing till it had taken effect. It was vehemently opposed by Fox as too aristocratic a measure, one too little in accordance with the glorious principles of the French Revolution. The debate to which it gave rise was the celebrated occasion when, after an alliance and friendship of twenty-five years, Burke pronounced his final severance from Fox, and the generous nature of the younger statesman was touched even to tears. Each was honestly convinced that the course on which he now went forth alone was right. How great were the issues of the conflict of opinion which found its

last expression on this occasion ! How profound the agony it cost them both ! Yet what great political birth can take place without pangs ?

CHAPTER VI.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE NAPOLEONIC WAR.

It is generally found convenient to divide off this later Napoleonic war from the preceding, simply because they were separated from each other by the Peace of Amiens. But there is no such division in the matter of principle or policy. Napoleon had been the life and centre of the war long before the Peace. Long before he became First Consul he had made his great stroke at England through Egypt. Beaten, for the first time in his brilliant career, by Englishmen, by Sir Sidney Smith and Nelson, he never for an instant faltered in his undying resolution of vengeance. Was the child of the Revolution, who had risen to rank through the Robespierres, likely, now that he had become a military despot, to relinquish his hostility to the country which had banded Europe against France, the country which now stood proudly out alone and unfriended for her independent rights ? The Peace had been hailed by the people with the greatest joy. What sanguine hopes were expressed that it might be an honourable peace ! How fatally was the delusion dispelled during the fourteen months of its duration ! The French Expedition to the West

Indies, the treatment of Piedmont, Switzerland, and Elba, Spain compelled to give up to France Louisiana and the Floridas, are only paralleled by Louis the Fourteenth's iniquitous use of the Peace which succeeded the Treaty of Nimeguen. What was the publication of Sebastiani's Report from the East but the manifest herald of the seizure of Egypt and the Ionian Islands?

Perhaps it is enough to remark on this point that even Macaulay, the fervent admirer of Fox's opposition to the earlier war, admits that "the restless ambition and insolence" of the great ruler of France were "insupportable," and that a war for the "dignity, the independence, the very existence of our nation was at hand."* Why should Great Britain fear to re-commence the struggle if it was necessary? It was painful enough; but her revenues and commerce were respectively equal to those of all Europe combined, her navy superior to all European navies combined. The last fact, indeed, might be stated as to her debt.†

Napoleon Bonaparte took his first step in connection with the new war as if he meant it to be internecine. Certainly, the effect of his unheard-of detention of some ten thousand British subjects who had taken advantage of the Peace to visit France, and his constant refusal to liberate them, was to stir up a feeling in England not less fierce than Burke had

* "Miscellaneous Works," II., 361, ed. 1860.

† Pitt to Lord Malmesbury, in "Malmesbury Diaries," IV., 147.

inflamed against the Revolution. If he had wished to make it still more vehement, what better course could he have taken than to plant his boasting legions and his fleets of transports along his coasts for the purpose of invasion? In no better way could he have enlisted every sentiment of patriotism in support of sacrifices which too surely made themselves felt as the British lost their money and one after another, their allies, and stood at last isolated, but upright, while all Europe bowed down at the feet of the conqueror.

How many contradictory opinions have been entertained of the character of this extraordinary man! Has M. Lanfrey set them at rest? He has at any rate left his mark; and the certain result is to confirm the estimate formed at the time of these wars by the British people. Since that time such feelings have often been attributed to mere obsolete national prejudice. Napoleon has often had his most devoted admirers amongst Englishmen; but this admiration will now be generally confined to his magnificent intellect and superb generalship, neither of which can ever be questioned; for they distinguish him from every competitor on the rolls of fame. It was his moral qualities which were in default; and this it is which M. Lanfrey has tracked, through every tortuous path and pitiful subterfuge, with the "keen scent of a Laconian hound." And yet it was not so long ago that the author of perhaps the greatest military history ever written was so dazzled by hereditary politics and soldierly enthusiasm that his immortal

“Peninsular War” contained passage after passage in laudation of Napoleon and in defence of his policy; while it is not easy to find any reference to his selfishness, ambition, cruel recklessness of human life, base moral delinquencies. And Napier was the soul of chivalry, almost a Quixote on the point of honour, the most painstaking of historians! To him, in fact—as to how many more!—Napoleon appeared as the incarnation of order emerging out of anarchy, the apparition of genius in the midst of stupidity, the large-minded, almost omniscient, director of affairs, hampered by the jealousies of inferior spirits, and hunted to ruin by a world in arms which failed to understand him.

Such violent oscillations of historical judgment are not only the temporary phases of one-sided opinion, advancing against one another like waves in a cross-sea till a level surface is produced, but they seem, in the case of a few extraordinary men, like Julius Cæsar and Napoleon, to be inherent in the very nature of the questions which bring them into prominence. If a great society, like that of Rome or France, has fallen into chronic decay, it can only be saved by some supremely able Dictator; and such, being human, exhibit their defects as soon as ever the power they have obtained displays their true character. Office, as the ancients said, proves what the man really is. As time proceeds, we learn to observe more soberly, to regard a multitude of events as a whole; but there will always be minds which fasten

with exclusive favour and interest on the tumultuous struggles of liberty, or, on the other hand, the stern processes by which order is elicited out of anarchy.

Napoleon was the clear-headed, capable man of force and intellect, producing order from the mass of ruin, confusion, and corruption which the break-up of a thousand years of social life could not but bring with it, a state of society nursed in the old feudal ages, and prolonged far beyond its natural limits. Further, he seems to have been raised up as much to administer the discipline required by France as to chastise the selfish corruption of the Continental Allies, whose institutions were also decayed. We can now trace the good work which was intended to be done by and through the Armageddon of Europe; and who can assert that it could have been done in any other way? We may point out and condemn the "brutal unscrupulousness" of the conqueror of Italy in dethroning the ruling princes, and especially in handing over Venice to Austria; we may reduce his notions of reconstruction to "a sort of amalgam of crude recollections of classical antiquity, and experience gained in revolutionary transactions or in the habits of military command," and scorn them as the mere introduction of "geometrical precision into an order of ideas which could not bear it;" we may prove to demonstration his ignorance of "modern political science," and the gross Machiavellianism of his real governing motives; but we cannot shut our eyes to the results. The

regeneration of Italy sprang from, first, its conquest, and then its rude reorganisation at his hands. Germany has made a vast progress, for which it might have waited long enough under the tutelage of "paternal government." Spain's intense suffering taught her some valuable lessons which she much needed. Light broke in even upon Russia, which had brought on herself a Nemesis for the career of Catharine. The cause of the people everywhere received a recognition which it was hard for the old feudal societies to perceive for themselves. The world has been better for the horrible process. It has made progress.

And these obstructive feudal societies—not without their merits—can they be visited with mere contempt and obloquy for failing to perceive the new Gospel in the horrible brutalities of the French Revolution, or the hollow professions of the world-conqueror? Faults, no doubt, in plenty dimmed the splendour of their resistance; yet they did their duty in standing firm, after many vacillations, to the cause of independence and European concert. To the thoughtful in these States—and they at last govern the world—how confused and conflicting must the outlook have appeared! History told them that there had been an old national freedom in all these kingdoms. It had disappeared and sunk. The National Assemblies had become the merest forms. "Nowhere," says Heeren, "had they been modelled into a true national representation. But the idea of

it not only lived in theory, disseminated and fostered by the first writers of the day, but was seen permanently realised in a neighbouring happy island-State. It could not, therefore, pass away from practical politics, and was necessarily, during the storms of the following period, the polar star which was for ever kept in view in all the aberrations of the times."

Writing in the early years of the present century, Heeren, Professor of History at Göttingen, thus described the position of Great Britain. They are words which the inhabitants of these islands might have hesitated to use; but no doubt they describe the truth. The minds which revolted from the extremes of despotism and democracy fondly turned towards the British Constitution. So also, by slower degrees, did France herself; for before their troubles none had admired it in theory more than the French. When this philosophical observer wrote his book the clouds had not yet cleared away. He was in doubt how the movement would end. Yet he thought the period through which Europe had just passed should rather be called the Constitutional than the Revolutionary Period; "for the struggle after regular but free Constitutions is the thread that guides us through the whole confusion;" and he had sagacity enough to see that "the most desirable thing at all times will be a diversity of Constitutions adapted to the character and wants of the people."* From our

* "History of the Political System of Europe and its Colonies," translated from the 5th German edition in 1833, pp. 322, 323.

present vantage ground, more than half a century later, we can observe the truth of these remarks. What a different Europe meets our gaze from that of which Heeren wrote! And what more distinctive difference is there than that it is now in north and south, in west, in centre, the Europe of Constitutions? Surely the east must follow.

The personal representative of this national "Polar Star" on which the troubled nations gazed was, for the time, William Pitt. Like Napoleon, he seemed raised up to do what no other man could have done. How excellently—though he builds too much on his premisses—has Macaulay described Pitt's attitude in the House of Commons before the Peace of Amiens:—

"There was his Empire. There were his victories—his Lodi and his Arcola, his Rivoli and his Marengo. If some great misfortune—a pitched battle lost by the Allies, the annexation of a new Department to the French Republic, a sanguinary insurrection in Ireland, a mutiny in the Fleet, a panic in the City, a run on the Bank—had spread dismay through the ranks of his majority, that dismay lasted only till he rose from the Treasury bench, drew up his haughty head, stretched his arm with commanding gesture, and poured forth in deep and sonorous tones the lofty language of inextinguishable hope and inflexible resolution. Thus, through a long and calamitous period, every disaster that happened without the walls of Parliament was regularly followed by a triumph within them. At length he had no longer an Opposition to encounter. Of the great party which had contended against him during the first eight years of his Administration, more than half now marched under his standard, with his old competitor, the Duke of Portland, at their head; and the rest had, after many vain struggles, quitted the field in despair. . . . Session followed Session with scarcely a single division. In the

eventful year 1799 the largest minority that could be mustered against the Government was twenty-five." *

Pitt was thus, when everything depended on the steadfastness of his country, able to hold forth an exhibition of strength and united action to the world, because he represented the Constitution of that country in the full harmony of all its parts in Church and State—King, Lords, and Commons; because, also, in spite of the most alarming seditions, directly propagated by French agency and French gold, and laying hold, whatever some may say to the contrary, of large masses of inflammatory matter in our great cities—a “faction” by no means “contemptible”—he had the courage to interpret the will of the majority of the nation, and apply the laws, or make fresh ones, when required. That many persons who were tried for high treason and sedition were acquitted, did in reality, as Lord Stanhope has pointed out, prove the wisdom of his policy; for the people thus learnt to trust their own institutions, and enthusiasts to keep within decent bounds. Thus, having planted himself deeper and deeper in the respect and admiration of his country, he was unanimously called, when the war was renewed, once more to the front, after his temporary retirement. Thus, hurling back defiance at the foe, still striking deadly blows, as at Trafalgar, still losing the fruits of British millions, as at Austerlitz, he died at his post, “killed by

* “Miscellaneous Works,” II., 354.

the enemy," said Wilberforce, * "as much as Nelson." Thus he left the legacy of a British foreign policy, saved through the storm, to be no less inflexibly preserved by his successors.

The best proof that Pitt had been hitherto right in supporting the war was afforded by the fate of the Fox and Grenville Ministry. That Ministry found itself reluctantly obliged, by the conduct of Napoleon, to pursue the very measures which Fox had spent his life in denouncing. Their expeditions to South America, Turkey, and Egypt failed more signally than any which Pitt had ever undertaken. Fox just lived long enough to discover that he had been in error; and the country turned at once to those who had the best title to represent his departed rival. It was now that the Government included the two men in whose hands lay, so to speak, the destinies of Europe—Canning, the Foreign Secretary; Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Secretary for Ireland.

The name of Canning, though it was many years before he became Prime Minister, seems to be the most fit to connect with the course of Great Britain after the death of Pitt. He was his pupil and friend; his enthusiastic supporter in speech, in verse, in prose. His "Anti-Jacobin" had already in some degree taken the place of Burke's graver appeals to the nation. It was his especial merit that he knew how to enlist

* "Life of Wilberforce," new ed., p. 267.

the sympathies of the British people, his especial work the banding together of the people of the Spanish Peninsula. When the successful Emperor of Western Europe, having laid all the Teutonic Kingdoms, as well as Italy, at his feet, resolved to imitate in one more respect his favourite mediæval type, and, like another Charlemagne, abolish the Pyrenees, thus realising the dreams of Louis Quatorze, it was with Canning that he had to reckon. It was now that Napoleon found himself, for the first time, having just arrived at the summit of his career, face to face with his destiny. Kings and armies and alliances had been shattered to pieces. He was now to learn what strength there lay in the weakness of a people, feeble, disunited, contemptible in a military point of view, ruined as a nation by years of misgovernment, but, nevertheless, that "Spanish ulcer," as he termed it, which, from the moment of his nefarious attempt to enslave the country, began to eat away his overweighted system. It was through Canning that Spain found her deliverance.

George Canning was peculiarly fitted to extend Pitt's Foreign Policy in the method which had unexpectedly offered itself for acceptance. Like him and like Burke, he had rather been anti-Foxite than one of the so-called Orthodox Tories—who, however, it must be remembered, followed each of these men in turn as their natural leader, and deserve to share their glories. It is remarkable that it should have

fallen to three men who were above party (in the strict sense of the word) to lead the nation through its perils; it is a proof of the sterling patriotism which rises to the surface in all British emergencies, leading the large majority to forget on such occasions party ties, and consigning the dregs to factious insignificance.

It required a man of genius to deal with the new state of affairs. The old policy of subsidies to the great allied powers, the only policy open to Pitt, had collapsed at Austerlitz, and seemed buried in his grave. Napoleon's genius had proved too strong for it. The nation cried out for a fair field for British military enterprise. They were sick of seeing their millions wasted in subsidies and loans, on those who proved unable to make any successful use of the aid. The short-lived Ministry of "All the Talents" had failed in finding a substitute. Canning saw that not only in providing a sphere of action of a different kind must a limit be put, for the time at least, to a system of borrowing which had become useless, but that British gold and British troops must be used in support of some country where the army might hold its own. Holland was no longer available. Was it possible that the Peninsula had offered at last true the base of operations? It seems easy to us now, after the event, to answer in the affirmative; yet the difficulties were immense. Large bodies of the Tories distrusted a popular insurrection, and they had only too just cause for hesitation. On the other hand, in

spite of the popular enthusiasm, the organs of Whigs discouraged any further opposition to the invincible Napoleon.

It was no doubt a dangerous experiment, as the event proved. How often was the cause all but shipwrecked! Yet Canning's popular sympathies supplied the enthusiasm which made him dash into the fray while he had the power to lead the country, and it was soon too far committed to draw back. His confidence in the desperate resolution of the Spanish people, after many a bitter trial, turned out to be well founded at last. The truth is, if we examine Canning's career, we shall find that, with all his contempt of the arts of the demagogue, and all his horror of the French Revolution and its English supporters, there was a side of his character which led him to believe intensely that the people would be with him if they were only rightly led. Instead of leaving them out of his calculation, he would write for them, legislate for them, use them for the public service, attract and guide them into patriotism.

But, before Canning was engaged in this congenial field for his talents, he became responsible for one of the boldest strokes of British war-policy which had yet been made. The seizure of the Danish fleet at Copenhagen was the reply which he sent to the Peace of Tilsit. On the raft moored in the Niemen, Napoleon and Alexander, combining against Great Britain, had audaciously divided the world between them. The Secret Articles, by which the

Danish fleet was to be used as the chief means of attack upon the one country as yet unsubdued, became known to Canning, we know not how. What was he to do? It was only a question of days and hours whether the two allies should use this fleet against*Great Britain, or be prevented from doing so by the menaced State. There was no hesitation: not an hour was lost. To the amazement of the Emperors, almost while they were talking, the thing was done. Lords Gambier and Cathcart carried off the fleet to England with the greatest facility.

It was a most dexterous stroke; but few things gave a greater shock to the opinion still entertained of British political virtue. "No expedition," says Lord Malmesbury, "was ever better planned or better executed, and none ever occasioned more clamour."* It was too successful, too barefaced a robbery. Here was the nation which professed such philanthropical sentiments, in which Wilberforce, after a struggle of twenty years, had just carried the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and which, from a pinnacle of moral elevation, was never weary of denouncing the crimes of its enemies, condescending to an act which was fit to be classed with the violent defiances of law so often committed by the French. And yet, if we examine the detractors of the British act, we find they either betray a strong Continental accent—and the Continent was too much moved† to be impartial

* "Malmesbury Diaries," IV., 391.

—or else a very distinct evidence of the spirit which dictated in England the opposition to the whole war. And certainly, since those times, historical opinion has decidedly settled down in favour of the course pursued by Canning. Even at the time, Wilberforce, a purist in all such matters, if we may so designate the conscientiousness of a man who measured every thought and action by the highest standard, considered “the policy doubtful, but our right clear if self-defence is clear.”* And again: “After much reflection, I am convinced that, under all the circumstances of the case, the Danish Expedition was just.”

The fact is that the issue has been confused by party-spirit. The arguments against the British tacitly assumed the independence, of the gallant Danes; whereas, their independence like that of Holland, could only be a reality when collective Europe guaranteed it. When the Continent was parcelled out between France and Russia, the Danish fleet was French or Russian. Denmark was grievously to be pitied for finding herself in such a dilemma; but what country did not suffer in that dreadful time? It would have been well if the fleet or its money-value could have been restored to her; but she, not unnaturally, preferred to throw herself into the arms of the enemies of England, and took the consequences. It was exactly akin to a thousand other acts which occur

* “Life of Wilberforce,” old edition.

in war, and pass unheeded from the simple necessity of the case.

It must also be remembered—and it is part of our general subject—that Denmark had its own policy in reference to Sweden and Norway, which cannot be dissociated from these transactions. It is, indeed, the key to them. Sweden was at this moment the one ally in the North which elected to stand by hard-pressed England; and yet it was an impotent ally; for its king was to all practical purposes insane. When Canning sent Sir John Moore with a small but efficient army to support Christian the Fourth, he was obliged to return as he went, for no common action was possible. Great Britain then could not let the Baltic take care of itself. Necessity was laid upon her. The policy of Denmark was naturally opposed to the ally of Sweden, its deadly enemy. Under such circumstances there could be no refuge in the friendliness of the nation, still less of its Government, even if it had not the excuse of acting under pressure, and it could not but act under pressure. It had no choice.

This high-handed act—for such, however justifiable, it certainly was—had removed one danger; but what a spectacle presented itself to the new Foreign Minister! The arbiter of Europe, extending the platform of the old Russian “Armed Neutrality” till it now covered what he called the “Continental system,” seemed at last to have found the means of destroying his inveterate foe. Baffled in Egypt

and Syria, baffled on the coast of Boulogne, his fleets finally destroyed, he had taken his revenge. He had at last sealed up the Baltic and Mediterranean, as he supposed, from the commerce of England. He had only to deprive her of the one friendly strip of territory left, through which the "nation of shopkeepers" could pour their goods into Europe. She must then die of inanition, and the world would be at rest. This last ally, Portugal, was forced to declare war with her in August 1807.

Well might any but the bravest and the most far-seeing shrink aghast from the prospect which now unfolded itself. The few great men England had yet produced had passed away; and those who were to fill their places were not yet recognised. It was a gloomy, a terrible outlook. And yet it was this very sealing up of Europe by the "Continental System," rendering it one vast prison, which, as soon as ever it was accomplished, began also to bring deliverance. It gradually drove the despairing populations to rebellion, and launched the conqueror on the sea of misfortune into which he was to sink headlong. Surrounded by an army of spies, what could the people of Europe do but darkly conspire and grimly watch for the signal of insurrection? Smuggling, of course, was not long in becoming universal. Napoleon himself had to permit licences for the purchase of British goods to be granted to those who could pay for them, but those only. No small part of his own army was clothed in British broad-

cloth. Thus the professed liberator stood before the world a confessed tyrant, forcing the sense of the odiousness of his rule on nations and families, not only by subjugation and terror, but by interference with the first law of civilisation, the free interchange of goods. Thus*also he overreached himself; for he presented Great Britain to the Continent as the true liberator and benefactor instead of France. The envy which had pursued her, the nautical arrogance, the selfishness, with which she was charged, the seizure of the Danish fleet, were all forgotten in the longing for what Napoleon would not let men have, the benefit of her trade.

At length, although affairs were ripening faster than he knew, when it seemed that no weapon forged by man could reach the height of the great Emperor, it was by himself that the deadly weapon was directed. Having handed over Turkey and Finland to the tender mercies of Russia, he would deal as he would with his own. The Spanish Peninsula should become a French province, and it should be done in such a way that no Spaniard should think of resistance. What were these demoralised people? They should be crushed before they knew that any mischief was intended.

The story of that seizure of the Royal Family, that apparently mad insurrection, the unexpected glories of Saragossa, the still more extraordinary capture of Dupont's army, and then the failures of Spain, the crushing defeats, the treacheries, the contrasts of the most surprising kind that marked the progress of the

struggle, are familiar enough. And yet it may be remarked that, perilous as the decision was, Great Britain would have betrayed her trust if she had not, under Canning's guidance, seized the opportunity. From a military point of view, there were advantages which the war had never yet afforded. The Peninsula could be reached from the Atlantic and from the Mediterranean. Its distance was not too great; it cut asunder the home resources of France; it afforded scope for English fleets as well as armies. The moral advantage was great; for this support of an oppressed people, rising against the common enemy, regardless of odds, called forth the more generous and noble elements in the British character. In that corner of Europe French armies might be detained, and fresh heart be given to those other down-trodden nations which might learn in time to follow the example of Spain.

The merits of Canning's Peninsular policy have been obscured by the errors into which he was led through the inexperience of his agents, especially through the influence of the poetical but unpractical Frere. How bitter, and yet how well deserved, is Napier's scathing exposure of the waste of British subsidies, the corruption and incapacity of the Spanish upper and middle classes, the mountain on mountain of obstacles which they piled up against the British enterprise! And yet, on a large survey, how could it have been otherwise? It is a terrible thing for a nation which has once been great to learn by hard

experience that it is perfectly incapable of obtaining its own freedom, and must depend for it on another nation whom it has little reason to love, and could hardly avoid suspecting. It is easy to turn into ridicule the bombastic pretensions, the absurd ebullitions of national vanity, the feeble combinations, the childish strategy, of a people who had been subject to every political and social disadvantage for centuries. All that might well be forgotten if it did not live in an immortal Work. What we may well desire to remember is that, after all, it was the "Spanish ulcer" which, by Napoleon's own confession, destroyed him. It will be to all time the glory of Spain and Portugal that the terrific sufferings they endured placed them in the front rank with Great Britain in the liberation of the world.

It might be thought that Lord Castlereagh's name ought to find its place here along with Canning's, as a main representative of British foreign policy, especially as he had already made his fame by his services in the cause of the Irish Union. This must depend upon the extent of such a survey as we are now making. If it had been of a more minute kind, a leading place must of course have been assigned to the man who was chiefly responsible for the disaster of Walcheren, who established by his courageous bearing at an eventful time, in spite of every defect of oratory, a firm hold on the country as leader of the House of Commons, and who represented the nation at the final settlement of

affairs, at one time alone, at another with the Duke of Wellington. But he was scarcely more than a subordinate; in Ireland under Cornwallis, in the Cabinet under the Portlands, Percevals, and Liverpools. At Vienna stood behind him, whether in person or not, the figure of the great Duke, and indeed long before the close of the war. The two men who left a mark on British policy, without whom, as far as we can see, it would not have been what it was, were Canning and the Duke.

Lastly, not only are we to ascribe the irrevocable seizure of the Peninsula as the British battle-ground, to Canning; we must remember that it was also due to him that his own country was inspirited to resist Napoleon's overtures at Erfurt, when to have listened would certainly have been to betray the cause. He, in fact, represented the indomitable spirit of Pitt, his mighty gift for ruling senates, his power of infusing his own enthusiasm into others. These are the qualities, tried in a time of sore need, which oblige us to forget how much longer he persisted in relying upon the independent efforts of the Spaniards than experience justified, and how inferior he showed himself to the Marquis Wellesley in the political ability necessary for dealing with the complicated questions which were always arising between the British and their allies. He had to leave office before he had the opportunity of retrieving those errors. His subsequent acts as Foreign Minister and Premier do not come within our limits, but it may add to a true

appreciation of his earlier career to reflect upon the glories of the later. If Canning were never remembered for anything else, his effective championship of the Spanish Colonies and of Greece must ever place him in the first rank of British statesmen; but in reality he proved his claim long before.*

Let us now turn to one who made, we might almost say, no mistakes—to him whose gigantic shadow had already been projected before his country from the plains of India, the shores of Ireland, the ramparts of Copenhagen. Trained in the best school for British generals, the best for British statesmen, in close contact from the first with the leading minds of the day, most of all with the great Marquis, his brother, he had nothing small about him. His standard was lofty, his acquired qualities were so exactly complementary to those which he possessed by nature, that nothing was wanting for such a man but a fair field; but the British public, looking about everywhere for a leader, little suspected that the instrument had been already formed, till all Europe rang with the effect it had produced.

It would be unpardonable to linger here over anything so well known as the career of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsula. Not even a sketch of it is permissible. It need only be remarked that, if

* The above was written before the appearance of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe's interesting notice of Canning in the *Nineteenth Century*. It confirms the view taken in the text.

the various lines of British Foreign Policy have been hitherto grouped around some conspicuous figures in British history, we may almost say of the Duke that he was himself the very embodiment of that Foreign Policy. The Governments under which he commanded in the Peninsula were those of second-rate men; the difficulties under which they laboured stupendous. Over and over again it was his right arm, humanly speaking, which alone supported them. Over and over again, when, fainting under the pressure, those at the helm refused their general his supplies, or almost fatally crippled his strategy, or desperately threw the whole responsibility of the continuance of the war upon his shoulders, it was his magnificent courage, patience, sagacity, all-comprehending foresight, which carried the vessel of the State over the tumultuous waves. Nothing but the conviction which he, and he alone, infused by degrees into the nation, that it was at last reaping the fruits of so many years of bitter trial and heroic sacrifice, could have turned the tide against the rising discontents, the threatening despair, which famine, misery, and disappointment had bred throughout the land. We forget the terrible process in the glorious event. There are those still living who do not.

At last, as victory after victory told its tale, as calumny was beaten down, stroke after stroke, by facts, as the echo of the furious struggle began to reverberate through Europe, as it began to rouse to emulation the fallen spirit of the subject nations,

as the mighty ruler himself began to show signs of confusion, and, losing the thread of his consummate calculations, embarked on enterprises beyond even his strength, and as the rising of Europe more and more clearly revealed itself as resting on the pivot of Wellington's strategy in the Peninsula, so, step by step, hardly believing their eyes and ears, the British people learnt to fling away their fears. Once more the light of Blenheim and Quebec, of Quiberon, Dominica, St. Vincent, the Nile, and Trafalgar flashed in every eye.

And now the roar of the "storm of nations" was heard to sweep over Europe to the East. Soon the indomitable Russians, aided by their snows, swept it back again in headlong rout. And then the great German Powers, their stern resolution nursed into fury under slavery, obeyed the summons; and the British people once more drew forth to better purpose than of old their gold. Soon all Europe stood arrayed for battle as it had never been arrayed before. Then the great conqueror experienced what it was to have won battles without having subdued the hearts of men. Grandly standing at bay, he found the task beyond his failing strength. Defeat after defeat culminated in the three days' fight of Leipsic, and the terrible rout from which he never recovered. And now the smaller German States threw off their bonds. The days of their humiliation were over, and retribution was at hand. The conquest of France, the abdica-

tion of Napoleon, the Congress of Chatillon, the Quadruple Alliance at Chaumont, followed in quick succession; but not more rapidly than Wellington had fought his way over the Pyrenees, and beaten down the gallant Soult in the South of France.

The war had brought to light the noblest heroism; all classes had shared its glories; but it only brought to the front one first-rate general to match Napoleon. It was not long before the final crisis arrived which was to place on his brow the crown woven, not by his own country alone, but by united Europe. The escape of the Emperor from Elba, the Hundred Days, the Battle of Waterloo, the final collapse of the common enemy, prepared the way for the last great settlement of the world, which must now, in concluding our survey, briefly engage our attention.

It was at Vienna that the man who had thus been prepared by all his previous career to be the true moderator of Europe and arbiter of the Balance of Power, exhibited himself as the representative of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain. Let us mark the lesson. Did the laurel-crowned Duke bring to the Congress the message of *vae victis*? Was the old enemy of his country to be shorn of her natural dimensions, and to be rendered for ever powerless to cross the steps of the island-Empire? Was that Empire which had spent 600 millions in the Twenty-two Years War, and entailed the cost on her posterity, perhaps for ever, as well as on herself, which had in

fair fight swept every nation from the seas, and might claim to keep all she had conquered, was she to find within the Settlement an acknowledgment of her rigid rights? No. As Great Britain once more gave the lesson of self-renunciation, we may at least demand that her merits shall be recognised. She had nothing to do but to draw back and selfishly defy Europe to touch her. She did nothing of the kind. Napoleon in his distress addressed the Prince Regent as "the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of my enemies." If the relegation of the fallen chief to St. Helena has been thought to weigh against the last of these epithets, candour must admit that after the flight from Elba no choice remained. But this country may well point to her conduct at the Congresses. She might have kept all; she gave up all, or nearly all. Of all that she had taken from France and her allies she retained but the necessary posts for her commerce in India, the Mediterranean, the West Indies, and the German Ocean. The Isle of France, Malta, the Cape of Good Hope (then the mere neighbourhood of the Cape itself), Heligoland, a mere speck in the sea, Tobago, and St. Lucia, represented all her gains. The country which had lavished and mortgaged its resources, afterwards bought with still more money some South American possessions which she had taken from her enemies in the war.

But her conduct in this respect passed almost unnoticed. It was expected as a matter of course. What did, and for ever must attract attention, was

the stand made by the Duke against the selfish policy of the British Allies, who in the flush of vengeance would have dismembered France and absorbed Poland and Saxony. Well knowing that the quarrel had long ceased to be with the French people, and was only with her ambitious ruler, from whose tyranny the war had liberated them; well knowing that the independent voice of that great nation can never be safely missed in the Councils of Europe, all schemes for the humiliation of the prostrate enemy were resisted at any cost. Even the spoils which she had captured from the capitals of the world were left (at the Treaty of Paris) in her possession. Even two-thirds of the ships of war at Antwerp were returned to her, the remainder to the King of Holland, the country which had not long before lost its name, in its incorporation with France, as "The alluvia of French Rivers." In accordance with the previous settlements of Europe, the Low Countries were now once more rendered independent in the form which then seemed best for permanence, a form since modified for the better. The relations of Poland, Saxony, and Italy to the Great Powers were settled on an independent basis as far as circumstances permitted; not, indeed, as satisfactorily as might have been wished, but very differently from what such settlement would have been except for the determined attitude assumed by the Duke of Wellington as the British Plenipotentiary.

To load the Treaties of Paris and Vienna—

and they have here been taken together—with obloquy because they disregarded the wishes of more populations than one is well enough in theory, and just so far is a lesson for the future; but it is to mistake wishes and theory for facts and reality. It is an anachronism not unlike the complaints made on previous occasions when prolonged wars were brought to an end by unpopular Treaties. It was not likely that the great military Powers which had felt the heel of the conqueror, and were hardly restrained by Great Britain from tearing France to pieces, would cordially accept those modern ideas which would have had the effect of materially reducing the compensations to which they naturally looked. How nearly Great Britain and Austria (along with France, which owed her position at the Congresses to the British) were engaged in deadly conflict on this very point with their own allies, Russia and Prussia, cannot surely even yet be forgotten. It was necessary to make the best of the situation, and to leave, as after the Peace of Utrecht, the minor settlements to the action of time. Europe could by no means afford at that time to have any more wars; the very memory of them would suffice to influence the nations to future pacific compromises. So, indeed, it turned out. If some of the mistakes then necessarily made, especially as regards Italy, have not been set right without wars, it is but fair to remember that the general settlement has not been seriously disturbed till quite of late years, and that even now the chief

changes which have occurred can only, in a partial sense, be attributed to those mistakes.

This sketch of the great Settlement, and the part taken in it by Great Britain, needs no comment as to its relation with the previous portions of these outlines. Whether right or wrong, the world might see that the British policy had at least been consistent. What she now contended for and carried, was identical with that which had all along formed the keystones of the arches of her Empire—the safety of her commerce, the safety of her dependencies, the safety of her own shores, the balance of European States, the concert of the European Powers. She had proved her perfect comprehension of the fundamental political truth, that the nation which is not ready at a great crisis to make every sacrifice is doomed to the loss of its influence, and then of its independence; she had also proved her comprehension of the equally great political truth, that it is not the nation which grasps all that keeps all.

Two or three more sentences may sum up the whole history of the British Empire during this reign. We have seen that it had, as a matter of fact, been forced upon the people of these islands by circumstances similar to those which accompany the action of human beings in every stage of society. As each generation received its inheritance from its predecessors it followed the law of nature in attending to its preservation. To preserve it, demanded alliances, for which the possession of Hanover gave

great advantages. These soon complicated the old British relations with the Continent. Each succeeding generation added a sanction to these relations, old and new. Each alliance was worked in, by the valour of the people and the wisdom of their rulers, towards the support of a definite Foreign Policy required by the very nature of the Empire. When Europe was invaded by the aggressive enthusiasm of the French, and conquered by the genius of Napoleon, the time had come either to relinquish what previous generations had established, with the certainty of having to fight the battle on British shores, or else to do precisely what was done—engage in the struggle, and fight to the last. There was no middle course. It had not escaped the observation of statesmen that Great Britain depended, no longer on the cultivation of her soil, or on communication with a few Colonies, but on her foreign commerce extending over every part of the world. The issue could not be evaded. The whole past history of the nation, as well as its prospects for the future, demanded the course it took. It is difficult to see what considerable step was really wrong in the whole series of transactions. Thus was the Empire gained; thus was it defended.

If this is the true history of the case, the further question, whether it was worth while to make these enormous sacrifices, and incur the risks which such an Empire could not but involve in the future, is not only outside of our present limits, but wholly out of place. And yet it is quite natural to ask, Has this

Empire done any good? Is the world better for it? Are we ourselves the better? It might be enough to point to the late Mr. Roebuck's eloquent verdict* given not long before he died; but it may not be amiss to close this chapter by drawing attention to a still larger view of the case.

Perhaps we shall see our way best by inverting the natural order, and observing what were the evils which accompanied the growth of the Empire. These were mainly two, and they were geographically distributed—African slavery and the slave-trade; and, secondly, the corrupt dealing with and shameful treatment of Asiatic princes and officials.

With respect to both of these evils the same thing may be said. Nothing can be more unfair than to judge the actors in these matters, or the nation that supported them, by the standards with which we are now familiar. The best of men did not at first perceive the inherent vice of slavery. We have but recently witnessed the long and painful processes of public opinion in the United States, and are even now watching it among the Boers of South Africa. The slave-trade with Africa having been first established with the benevolent idea of saving the feebler native races of Mexico and the West Indies from extinc-

* "England has led the world onward in the course of improvement. Whatever good has been done for mankind you will find the finger of England in the doing of it. She has taught mankind their rights. She has taught men to feel towards each other as men should feel. She has turned Europe from a den of slaves into a great band of freemen. That is the present state of Europe. That is owing to England." (Speech at Sheffield, June 17, 1878.)

tion, the moral sense of Europe was for a long time wholly unshocked by its continuance. The right of slave-traffic formed an important compensation to England for her sacrifices at the Peace of Utrecht; while, about the same time, the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, receiving from Christopher Codrington a portion of his West India estates, never seems to have been struck with any notion of emancipating its slaves, but simply resolved to educate and convert them. The question rather is, whether in any nation but one under whose free institutions a Clarkson and a Wilberforce were able, however gradually, to make their voices prevail against prejudice and interest, such men could have succeeded in changing the whole current of national opinion, and this at a time when the gospel of the French Revolution, which soon began to run parallel with the efforts of British Christianity, was exercising a distinctly counteracting influence. The question rather is, whether any nation but one whose whole foreign policy, guided by the commercial instinct, tended to make her more and more the mistress of the seas, could have not only prevented the revival of the practice by her own people, but, by the force of a severe and constant pressure upon other nations, have abolished the trade all over the civilised world. Perhaps, when all other proofs of the usefulness to mankind of the British Empire have been rejected, this one alone will be admitted. What enormous consequences have ensued! When did a nation make

a greater sacrifice than to provide twenty millions of pounds as compensation to her own planters for the emancipation of all slaves within her dominions?

And even to the calm view of an impartial observer of events this African slave-trade, for which England was largely responsible, this foul blot on humanity, presents itself as only part of a great scheme out of which a great good has emerged, and which is gradually overpowering all recollection of the past evil. What people has not passed through a discipline of suffering? What invasions, conquests, enslavements, insurrections, civil wars, deadly struggles with neighbours, have not formed the history of every race and people of mankind! This has always been the predestined road to progress among the old races. With their full share of these evils, yet left far behind the rest of the world in the career of civilisation, the African family had, on the contrary, made no progress whatever corresponding to that of the more favoured races of Europe and Asia. Nor were the people of these ancient continents to be their sole or even chief educators. The task was mainly reserved for the populations which emigrated from Europe to the New World. Combining all the elements of strength, and all the living elements of Christianity which were no longer possessed by the Asiatic races, invigorated by all the manly influences of colonial life derived from the British race, they have been the chief trainers of the people of Africa for the work which yet lies before them. The millions who have

been stolen from their country, and have propagated in America, have now, after many generations, formed free and civilised communities in their own country, as well as in the West Indies; now at last, also, in the United States. Can it be doubted that the relations between the Negro races on opposite sides of the Atlantic are clearly destined to become more and more intimate as time goes on?

Nor are the great traditional influences of that slave-trade-abolition struggle yet exhausted. They are propagated in the multitude of trading and of missionary enterprises at the present day; among their instigators are still found the bearers of the honoured names distinguished during the last three generations in the great cause. And is there nothing in the consideration that the future which is now dawning on Africa is placed under the tutelage of British freedom, the British system of government, British literature, British Christianity, through the very fact of the existence and omnipresence of the British Empire? Englishmen transplanted the backward African growth to another hemisphere; their descendants brought it back with added vigour, and replanted it on its native soil; the Imperial race undertakes to cultivate and nurture the still tender civilisation which has been the product of such a marvellous history. How many are at this moment on the tiptoe of expectation while centre upon centre of new life is being formed, road upon road opened up by the pioneers of discovery, capital such as no other

nation could pour in, collecting for the ventures of commerce! What are the faults of colonists, the errors of the mother country, the wars of frontier, the transient storms which from time to time darken the skies, when we contemplate the grand result, the opening future?

And what of India, where British responsibilities seem to be only just beginning, and whose dark mysterious presence, dogging the footsteps of its lord, seems, like that of another Frankenstein, to appal the imaginations of so many thoughtful men? Evil as were too often the beginnings of their rule, has the British supremacy existed for nothing?

And, first, it must be remembered that the question has been, not whether India should be subject to European rule or not, but whether that rule should be exercised by France or England, whether the founders of Empire should be Lally and Dupleix, or Clive and Warren Hastings. The time had long passed when any combination of Indian potentates could have secured Indian independence. Granted that the mixed commercial and conquering instincts of a successful trading Company, too long uncontrolled by the Home Government, developed a series of corrupt and high-handed acts of which we are now ashamed, we have only to study the records of the famous trial which brought them all to light, to perceive the totally different aspect in which those deeds presented themselves to the responsible actors on the scene. But, if we may say so without boasting,

was there any other country in the last century, in which the grand though furious eloquence of a Burke could have, during a course of years, gradually pervaded the whole mind of a people, and steadily raised, in spite of the most powerful opposition, the standard of public opinion to an elevation from which it has never since declined? Could that have been expected from monarchical, revolutionary, or Napoleonic France? Our neighbours would scarcely say so themselves.

And when, under a Pitt at home and a Cornwallis in India, the word had gone forth that the same moral principles which were recognised in Europe should be supreme in Asia; when the benevolent sway of a Teignmouth and a Bentinck alternated with the equally benevolent, because necessary and peace-giving, policy of the Wellesleys and Lord Hastings; when the dread of losing what had been so hardly gained, gradually disappeared, and connivance with degrading superstitions gave way first to mere toleration, and then to tentative suppression of moral outrage; when careless indifference was superseded by the permission of individual efforts to civilise, educate, and Christianise these millions; when the long ages of restless war and successive conquests were found to be terminated by successive generations of peace and progress, extending at last over the vast Peninsula, who but the most absolute pessimist can fail, in the contemplation of the past, to see that there has been a cause for the existence

of the British Empire? The recent statistical Reports of Dr. Hunter—statements of bare fact which cannot be refuted—ought to be written in characters of gold for the benefit of those whose fears, or whose party spirit, still blind them to the true grandeur of their wonderful inheritance.

Is it nothing that this gigantic wedge, thrust into the centre of Asia, surrounded by the sea and by the mountains which enable it to be held by such a Power as great Britain, should thus be in a position to extend its own influence for good to China, to Burmah, and to the Islands of the East; may we not hope, also—for it is even now opening upon us—to the fierce nations on the West? Is there any higher civilisation, any better system of government, any more ennobling literature, any purer form of Christianity in the world to which such propagating influences could have been entrusted? If the process is too often that of “sowing in tears,” too often impeded by human error, too surely accompanied by retributive suffering on the part of the rulers themselves, is it a dream, is it a wild vision, or is it not already beginning to be an accomplished fact, that the Imperial race shall “reap in joy?”

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE THE THIRD'S INFLUENCE ON BRITISH FOREIGN
POLICY.

WE have lost sight of the old King while we have been watching the guidance of events by Pitt, Cornwallis, Canning, and the Duke of Wellington. He no longer, indeed, after 1784, holds the first and most prominent place in a review of British Foreign Policy, but he nevertheless had a most important share in shaping it. When he had at last found a Minister after his own heart in the youthful Premier, the letters contained in Lord Stanhope's "Life of Pitt" sufficiently show how well he trusted and how wisely he advised him. It is also easy to see how much he learnt from him. It is a part of the vulgar system of depreciating the King to exhibit him as a representative of the obstructive side of Toryism, of the narrowness of monarchical and oligarchical government, of irrational hostility to France, of a hard love of war for its own sake, and of power for its own sake, of the extreme bigotry of "Protestantism;" and these things form the staple of modern unfavourable criticism.

Nothing can be further from the truth. Pitt was the most liberal and enlightened statesman of his day, and the King marched by his side. With Pitt he adopted, cheerfully and deliberately, that series of noble domestic reforms at which we have already glanced,

and which could not possibly have been carried without his cordial assent. Of the Union with Ireland he himself spoke as "the happiest event of his reign." The war with France he dreaded as much as his young Minister; for he had never forgotten the lesson of the American War. The relief given to the Roman Catholics in the matter of the Penal Laws received his warmest support. The Constitution granted to Canada was only erected upon the basis he had laid down with Lord North in reference to the same colony seventeen years before.

The one principle (of any importance) on which they utterly differed was the question of Roman Catholic Emancipation. On that he was firm from first to last. We may all nowadays wish that the measure which was conceded in 1829 could have been carried in 1800; but we are apt to lose sight of the fact that the King was supported by the chief Judges, the Bishops, the majority of the Peers, and apparently a large majority of the people of England. The great men who saw the necessity of the case were but few, and could not have passed the measure even had the King felt, and been advised to feel, less scruple on the score of his Coronation Oath. We are apt to lose sight of the consideration that the King's reign had exactly covered the great Continental movement against the Jesuits, and the full vigour of the British religious movement both on the part of the Wesleyans and the Church of England, an advance which was as distinctly coloured with anti-Roman

principles as it was based on the appeal to Scripture and the conscience.

Nor was it as easy then as it has seemed since, to disconnect the idea of granting political power to Irish Roman Catholics, from that of providing a common and dangerous interest between them and their co-religionists in the country with which we were in deadly conflict. During the horrors of the Revolution the religious instinct formed a common bond between all who were attacked; but when Napoleon had become supreme the former phase had disappeared.

We are also apt to forget that, desirable as Roman Catholic Emancipation has become in modern times, the statesmen of the periods when political disabilities were framed had much to say for themselves. To understand this, it is only needful to take an impartial view of the difficulties under which Elizabeth, James the First, and William the Third laboured. It is not of much use to blacken the character of this or that person when a policy has been part and parcel of a vast network of events. Finally, when the policy of "Concurrent Endowment" has in our own day ranged on either side the greatest and best men, it is hard upon the old King to blame him for the following remarks:—

"I am certain any encouragement to such an idea must give real offence to the Established Church in Ireland, as well as to the true friends of our own Constitution; for it is certainly creating a second Church Establishment, which could not but be

highly injurious. The tolerating Dissenters is fair; but the trying to perpetuate a separation in religious opinions by providing for the support of their clergy as an Establishment is certainly going far beyond the bounds of justice or policy." *

And yet this was the substantial policy of the statesmen who at that time urged Roman Catholic Emancipation.

But it is as the gallant chief, the personal head round whom the whole land rallied when the war with revolutionary France at last broke out, that we are now to view the King. Vain would have been the mighty influence of Burke's works, vain the oratory of Pitt, under the awful trials of that war, had not the example of George the Third, now an experienced statesman and personally cognisant of every step taken, down to the very minutest, afforded a rock on which the agitated waves spent themselves in empty menace—a rock unshaken, immoveable. As we read his letters to Pitt, or the Bishop of Worcester; as we watch him reviewing the Volunteers at Windsor; as we study his plan of defence, his arrangements for the safety of the Royal Family, his resolution to reserve the foremost place in battle for himself; as we visit with him the fleets and dockyards, and hear his encouraging words to officers and men, we seem to catch some faint echo of the spirit-stirring shouts which greeted him as the father of his country. As we watch his undaunted personal courage in the midst of furious mobs, his imperturbable

* Stanhope's Pitt, Vol. III. (Appendix).

coolness in the very conflict with assassins, his pity and mercy for them, his splendid conduct during the Gordon Riots, when every Minister deserted him, his moral courage in defying the shafts of a ridicule to which he was by no means insensible, we learn'to understand the feeling with which he was regarded during his life-time. When the feeble Portland Ministry, unable to bear up against the pressure of the French power in Spain, was breaking up under accumulated disasters, and when Lord Wellesley had resolved to retreat upon the lines of Torres Vedras, and there, relying on the resources of his own consummate genius, to hold out to the last; when it rested with him alone to undertake, or be crushed by, the tremendous responsibility, it was the aged King, now more than seventy, and nearly blind, who stood firmly by him, and dictated the following letter of noble encouragement:—

“His Majesty trusted that his Ministers would feel with him the advantage of suffering him [Lord Wellington] to proceed according to his judgment and discretion in the adherence to the principles which he has laid down, unfettered by any particular instructions which might embarrass him in the execution of his general plan of operations.” *

This was nearly the old King's last political act. After his Jubilee, a rejoicing such as no other English sovereign has ever witnessed, he gradually sank under the exceeding weight of public and private trial which he had been called upon to bear, nor

* “Wellington (Supplementary) Despatches,” VI., 515.

retained his faculties quite long enough to know that the labours of fifty years had achieved such a crowning success as far eclipsed even that with which he began his reign.

Though in this sketch the character of the King has only come before us upon those sides of it which bear directly upon the subject of Foreign Policy, it may be well to say a few more words upon its indirect influence. The modern argument takes a very simple form. George the Third was a stupid, illiterate, despotic sovereign. It was no wonder that the country which was benighted enough to respect and obey him should engage in unrighteous and disastrous wars, the most successful of which only succeeded by means of saddling the nation with an almost fabulous amount of debt under which we still groan. Or, the disastrous nature of that policy being accepted by a large class of writers and readers as indisputable, the condemnation of the sovereign is taken as a matter of course.

It will have been seen that it is not by denying the King's intimate connection with the fortunes of his country that we can meet the argument. He was no *roi fainéant*. On the contrary, the maintenance of the exact converse of the two premises is the position assumed in these pages. The wars in which Great Britain was engaged in the King's reign are here maintained to be excusable or inevitable; they were, on the whole, beneficial; the Foreign Policy was consistent and

successful; the treaties wise and moderate, or at least the best possible under the circumstances; the very debt turned out, to the astonishment of the world, one great means of public advancement and security. So with the monarch. If the present generation has been brought up to misunderstand his character and underrate his abilities, that misunderstanding contributes one ingredient to the estimate which has too often been formed of the public events of his reign, and which has been combated in these pages.

Let us devote, then, the short space which remains to an examination of that part of the King's character which has been least appreciated in modern times. The mere glance already given at his courage, resolution, consistency, and industry may be sufficient; for no one disputes his possession of these virtues. The error appears to arise chiefly from a constant repetition of the charge that he was an ill-educated, illiterate, and therefore narrow and prejudiced man, whose opinion being of little real consequence, it was monstrous that the destinies of Great Britain, at such a critical period of its history, should have been to so large an extent in his hands. This view readily falls in with the impatience, natural in a free and self-governing society, of any check which such self-government receives by the over-weighting of a particular branch of the Constitution, and notably the Monarchy. And how easy is it to forget the gulf which separates the modern development of the Constitution from its actual condition a century

ago ! Retaining the same general configuration, how vast are in reality the changes, many of them, like the operations of nature, silent changes, which come over political institutions in such an interval of time !

Was, then, George the Third ill-educated and illiterate ?

The charge has been supported on the errors in spelling observable in his letters, on his own complaint to Sir Herbert Taylor, on the gossip of the period of his youth, and on the negative evidence of his asserted want of special interest in statistical and economical questions.

There must be something at the bottom of this. We have to inquire how much it amounts to, the influences of a counteracting tendency in later life, and the evidence existing of a very different intellectual level from that which the King might have been expected to reach, under the presumed deficiencies of his preparation for public life.

First, as to his spelling. It can only be understood by those who have read much of the MSS. of the middle of the last century, and still more before that, how rare it is to find good spelling. "Johnson's Dictionary" had not yet appeared, and only a few even amongst superior people possessed the secret of correct orthography. Further, the badness of the spelling in the King's letters is exaggerated. It is often a hasty slip, as the correctness of the spelling in some other letters proves ; it is

worse at periods just preceding his serious illnesses ; and, as he grows older, the spelling improves. This defect may be made too much of. It must not be measured by our present standard. It is this, perhaps, of which the King chiefly complained in after-life. He had experienced the difficulty of overcoming the defect.

But the whole charge has grown out of its proper proportion in consequence of the political excitement which attended on the young Prince's early education, and which finds vent in numerous works of that day. The nervous dread, not unnaturally felt by the country, of a return to the principles, if not the persons, of the Jacobite House brought to light every little fact upon which an attack on the Prince's tutors, and on the parents who had appointed them, could be based. Thus the famous Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, one of the "preceptors," was only too open to attack through the connection of his family with the Pretender ; but he himself was in reality beyond suspicion. So also Mr. Stone had been accused of Jacobitism ; and Mr. Scott was a follower of the crafty Bolingbroke. The Court of Frederick, Prince of Wales, had been the rallying point of the Opposition to Government, and everything connected with it was dragged before the public after his death. Yet it is difficult to understand how such able men as these all were, could really have neglected the substantial parts of the future King's education, though they

might have found him by constitution as little disposed to the details of school-work as many boys of good ability often are at a particular age.

There is no doubt that the young Prince was often idle and always sensitive; but that he picked up during his boyhood, perhaps in an irregular way, a large amount of what goes to constitute a well-educated man, can scarcely be disputed. He certainly learnt to express himself with great vigour and clearness; he certainly formed a high standard of literary excellence, to which he afterwards industriously strove to attain by his own exertions; he assuredly learnt to value books and literary men; beyond doubt he obtained an elevation of sentiment which was only too often wanting in persons who could spell, even in that day, with correctness. His ideas of the Constitution were in all probability gained at the highest possible source, the "Commentaries" of Blackstone, which were sent to him from time to time, after being delivered as Lectures in the Hall of All Souls College, the author thus making amends for his refusal to become the Prince's tutor. No one in his dominions understood or loved that Constitution better. We may refuse to admire Bolingbroke; but no one can deny that an intimate acquaintance with his political works must have had an elevating effect on the mind of even a dull youth, and it is only ignorance which ascribes dulness to the young Prince.

For the effect which the King's writings and conversation produced, let us not turn to courtiers. Let

us put aside such excellent evidence as we can extract from Madame D'Arblay's "*Memoirs*," or Mrs. Delaney's "*Life*," or even from Dr. Johnson, who might be considered prejudiced. Let any one read the poet Beattie's artless account of an hour's interview which he had with the King and Queen, and which he recorded in his private diary in 1773. He will there see more than sufficient warrant for the remark of that able man that "both the King and Her Majesty showed a great deal of good sense, acuteness, and knowledge, as well as of good nature and affability."* Or take the opinion of Mrs. Montagu, the queen of literature in her day, so justly celebrated for the elegance of her own compositions:—"As I have a most loyal respect for the King, I have always taken great delight in the peculiar elegance of his language. It is a very essential thing in great persons whose words are always remembered and often repeated."†

Let us next ask ourselves how a dull, illiterate prince could have proved himself such a zealous and consistent patron of literature as he did in ways too numerous to mention; such an indefatigable collector of books, as evidenced by his magnificent library and Johnson's dictum upon it; such an intelligent patron of astronomical research, as in the case of Herschel and others; such a connoisseur and patron of music, as shown in the case of Handel and others; of

* "*Beattie's Life and Writings*," by Sir W. Forbes, 2nd edition, 1807, I., 353.

† *Ibid.*, I., 287.

painting, as to be the founder of the Royal Academy ; of architecture, botany, and the drama ? Is it so easy to find crowned heads who have vindicated their title to rule by an equal claim to respect from cultivated men ? Are there so very many more accomplished men in private life ? We may not care much for Lord Eldon's politics, but we must recognise him as one of the very greatest of our legal chiefs ; and of a State Paper written by the King in 1809, when he was seventy-one, Lord Eldon said that it was "one of the finest compositions I ever saw or heard of in my life."* We may not admire Bishop Watson in all respects, but we must admit his ability. He also did homage to the King's "understanding, which it was the fashion to decry."† Wilkes, it is well known, thought highly of his talents. We have seen Benjamin Franklin extolling him in words which might be engraved on the royal monument. These people were not fools.

Perhaps in few more beneficent ways did George the Third leave his mark on the world than by his

* "I found that Perceval had received the King's Paper [on the change of Ministry], which is one of the finest compositions, and the most affecting, I ever saw or heard of in my life. . . The King has also written a most dignified Paper upon two persons, yet having the seals of Secretaries of State in their hands [Canning and Castlereagh], fighting a duel." (Twiss's "Life of Lord Eldon," II., 98. Sept. 23, 1809.) Mr. Rose, another excellent judge, speaks of this letter in precisely the same terms :—"It was dictated to Colonel Taylor by the King, and was written with great energy and spirit, as the King's own used to be on great and interesting occasions ; with much fairness as well as firmness." (Rose's "Diaries," II., 395.)

† Anecdotes of His Own Life, I., 242.

intelligent zeal in the cause of maritime discovery ; and this, at any rate, has a direct bearing on the Foreign Policy of Great Britain. "Ever since his accession to the crown," says Lord Stanhope, "these scientific voyages had been a favourite object with his Majesty."* Why should Lord Sandwich and Captain Cook have the sole credit for the discovery of Polynesia, which is in no slight degree due to the zealous energy of the King? Like Charles the Second, he took the deepest interest in naval architecture, and delighted in models of the latest nautical inventions, which he kept in his palace. Like Charles, he encouraged his brothers and son to become naval officers, and proved his own partiality for the sea by his devotion to yachting, as well as his familiarity with ships of war and dockyards. Perhaps it is not to be regretted that his love of the sea first set the fashion of that resort to sea-side watering-places which has now become a universal fashion. It is easy to see how powerful an impulse was thus given to those tastes and habits which have made modern England what it is.

The mention of Charles the Second, not a King of whom the country has reason to be proud, except in the respect just mentioned, may remind us that, of all our kings, George the Third was the only one who could approach him in the charm of manner and the desire to please. The difference between the two examples was that the ease and grace of Charles

* "History of England," VI., 279.

were the “French polish” of a libertine; the simple affability of George was the natural outcome of a virtuous and religious life. It had its reward in a popularity which was stable and sustained because founded on respect. In appearance he had the advantage of Charles. Mr. Donne’s summary (in the Introduction to his book already quoted) is borne out by all contemporaries:—

“If not handsome, he was comely, healthy, and active; his figure manly, his habits temperate; he rose and dined early; was fond of farming and manly sports; he went regularly to church, was even patient of long sermons; his greetings were hearty, his laugh loud; he gossiped freely among his tenants at Windsor and Kew; enjoyed a play, was well skilled in music, and was a good-humoured King.”

The transparent sincerity of this thoroughly English style was what Englishmen liked; and to one who possesses it they forgive many faults. But they had no moral faults to forgive. During a long reign, never even did the voice of scandal attack his fair fame. Once indeed, when he was a youth, there had been some gossip, and it has been repeated of late years; but it is the merest gossip, resting on nothing but hearsay, and improbable to the last degree. The most extraordinary thing is that he alone, or almost alone of the men of his family, should have thus preserved a virtue so rare in that age. It must be attributed to a woman who has been the butt of calumny, his mother. His moral rectitude and firm religious principles are due to her care as much as to that of the people she placed about him. Not

that we may forget the excellent Bishop Thomas, to whom the King himself never forgot his debt of gratitude. How, then, did so many of his brothers and sons exhibit a totally different example? It may simply be attributed to the evil influences of the old Court, which, in spite of all care, could not be kept from reaching such high-placed persons. An individual or two might be sufficient. The readers of Walpole's "*Last Journals*" can understand how dangerous even one person, retained unaccountably at Court, might be; and it is only matter of history how some at least of the King's sons were corrupted by some of their uncles.

It might seem as if the vices of the Eighteenth Century could not be purged out of the Royal Family except through the transmission of an exceptional virtue in the head of it, one on whose shoulders was thought worthy to rest a sort of vicarious punishment in the domestic disappointments and distresses of a long life. Alleviated, indeed, they were by brilliant compensation. What King ever had a more excellent helpmeet than the good Queen Charlotte, a more perfect daughter than the Princess Amelia? But thus, and thus only, as it would seem, was the monarchical element in the Constitution to be preserved in an age when thrones were crumbling to the dust, and amongst a people whose long education in self-government made them increasingly intolerant of unworthy conduct in high places. Thus, and thus only, was the way to be

prepared for the virtuous Court and gracious government which it has been the privilege of the present generation to enjoy, and for the solid formation of a public opinion which forbids a return to the antiquated vices of the old *régime*.

While the habits and the character which he had so industriously formed helped him to hold a straight and manly course through all his public and private trials, a load as great as ever fell to the lot of any monarch, no heart can fail to be touched by the evidences of the struggle which they cost to a nature nervous, excitable, highly strung, sensitively alive to every touch of praise or blame, fully aware of the greatness of present issues, familiar with anxious thought as to the verdict of posterity. It would have been more wonderful if, under such pressure, he had always retained the use of his faculties, than that the shocks of fortune should from time to time have proved too much for them. How long and manfully he struggled against the disease when brought on by the factiousness of Whig Cabinets, the responsibility of the American War, the resignation of Pitt, the fluctuations of the French wars, is familiar to all who are conversant with the times. How remarkable are the extant letters in which he shows his sense of the imminence of an attack, and the expressions which, when it had overcome him, betrayed only too well the cause! Not less so are the records of his simple thankfulness on recovery, his entire abnegation of

self, absorbed in thoughtful care for the feelings of others.

That, in the midst of the loneliness which so oppressed the wearer of this heavy crown, the King should have persistently refused to lean on the usual prop of hard-pressed monarchs, the recourse to favourites, must also be remembered in his favour. The clamour as to Lord Bute has long been silent : the popular suspicions broke down at last under the statement of hard facts. Neither Lord North, Lord Eldon, or Pitt, were ever anything but trusted Ministers and honourable friends.

The King's perfect simplicity of life and personal economy were the butt of his caricaturists ; but caricaturists do not find it within their province to chronicle the splendid gifts which the King bestowed on modest merit, nor the devotion of twenty thousand a year out of his privy purse towards the expenses of the war. The most is made of some literary defects ; but it is convenient to forget that the King was familiar with Latin, German, French, and Italian ; that he was one of the first to patronise, by the encouragement of Joseph Lancaster, that popular education which is the glory of our age ; and that his once famous saying, that " he hoped the day would come when every poor child would be able to read his Bible," was anything but a figure of speech.

Say what we please, make what deductions we choose for errors of judgment, or defect of political sagacity, it cannot be seriously disputed that George

the Third, though no one would credit him with the highest intellectual powers, stands out before us on almost every point, far above the average of sovereigns either of our own or of other countries ; and, if this be so, the policy with which he was so intimately concerned can scarcely bear the pitiful character sometimes assigned to it.

Rather let us admit that the defence and preservation of the Empire which cost such sacrifices on the altar of duty, from the King on his throne down to the peasant at the plough, cannot but be matter for thankful reflection, and for steady resolution that the cause in which they suffered shall never be betrayed by those to whom the inheritance has descended. Such resolutions will be fruitful in exact proportion as the nation realises its responsibilities towards the races it has been called upon to govern, and fearlessly does its duty, proceeding in its future course on the same lines as those which have been here traced out in the past. This is the true, the only answer to the question whether the Empire acquired and wielded by Great Britain is to be regarded, in relation to the ruling race itself, as a blessing or a curse.

APPENDIX I.

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE BALANCE OF POWER.

SECTION I.

It is high time that an effort should be made to recover for the old and famous expression, "Balance of Power," something of its proper force and significance. There appears, during the last twenty years, to have been a sort of conspiracy in this country to assign an erroneous meaning to the phrase, and then to set it up as a sort of scarecrow, a target for abuse and obloquy. If it were a mere phrase, this would be a matter of no consequence; but it is perfectly well understood that the words have a very substantial meaning; that they mean nothing more or less than the principle that Great Britain has rights and duties in reference to her Continental neighbours, which may at any moment demand her interposition with all the force she can command. To evade this contingent duty; to assert the isolation of this country from the affairs of the Continent; to surround the exclusive pursuit of commerce and civilisation with a brilliant atmosphere of philanthropy, unmindful of the stern responsibilities which the nation has incurred in the course of the ages during which it has built up its grand position; to

spread the selfish doctrine, dear to Ethelred the Unready just nine hundred years ago; this is in many cases the avowed, in many more the unavowed but prevailing, principle of a large section of the intelligent and influential classes.

As these ideas are not likely to find general acceptance when plainly stated, the usual course is to take advantage of a certain unpopularity which the term *Balance of Power* has acquired, mainly in consequence of the abuse of the principle in the last century, and by treating it as an obsolete idea, a relic of barbarous times, the old bugbear from which this enlightened age has fortunately been delivered, to cover it with contempt; and, under the shelter of this repudiation, to proclaim the advent of a new Foreign Policy worthy of the Nineteenth Century.

It would not be difficult to quote scores of passages from popular writers in illustration of this method of proceeding; but the following may be taken as a fair representation of it. In denouncing the past policy of Great Britain in the East, a leading statesman recently explained the national conduct which he was denouncing, by deducing it from

“that tradition which has been the pest of Europe. It was called the *Balance of Power*. According to that tradition, when one nation was more powerful than the others, it was the duty of the others to combine together and pull that nation down, till they reduced it to an equality with them; so that Europe was always terrified by some bugbear or other. And in order to prevent these imaginary dangers, torrents of blood, infinitely more

than would have been necessary to meet them if they had occurred, have been uselessly and wantonly spilled. First, the bugbear was the House of Austria; then, when that was pulled down, it was France; and when France was reduced to a low condition, all the terrors of Europe centred upon Russia, and everything had to be done to prevent her progress and development. In pursuit of this narrow and foolish policy, for such I have always thought it, we took up the Turk."

Now it is perfectly true that if the Balance of Power really meant this, if it really meant a policy of interference with the progress and development of other States—we must suppose a legitimate progress and development,—"*sic utere tuo ut alienum non lædas*"—if it meant that, whatever changes may take place from generation to generation, it is the duty of each State to take care that none becomes more powerful than others, all to remain *in statu quo*, such a doctrine might well deserve to be reprobated. But this is not the Balance of Power; this is not what was ever meant by it. Under its name some shameful transactions have, indeed, taken place; and a sort of cant use of the phrase may have prevailed at one time or another, not far removed from that given above. It will here be shown that the principle, known by this name, on which Great Britain has acted for three centuries, has been a just and noble recognition of her duty in preventing Spain, Austria, France, and Russia, from becoming the robbers and tyrants of Europe; and in so doing that she has fought on the Continent the battles which would otherwise have certainly deluged her

own shores with blood, and perhaps destroyed her independence; that her principle of Balance has been only another name for self-defence, or rather for self-preservation; and, further, that no system of independent States ever has existed, or ever can exist, without adopting some such principle. If people assume, without proof, that they may claim the sanction of history for their doctrine, such an excuse must be pleaded for passing in review some well-known passages of the past, which it might be thought, hardly required to be brought once more to the front. And it will be shown that, however it may suit this school to proclaim the death and burial of the doctrine of the Balance of Power, their dogmatism is repudiated by authorities to which even they cannot refuse to pay respect, if not deference.

Not that such a controversy can be decided by an appeal to International Law. Without disparaging for a moment the services rendered to modern times by the beneficent advance of this science, if, indeed, that term may be permitted, we cannot forget that it builds up its fabric on authority, and measures the cogency of its statements by their general acceptance; so that it is always open to fresh generations of men to pronounce that times have changed, and authorities become antiquated. It looks to foundations laid in law, to treaties, precedents, and formal expressions. The appeal really lies to something deeper and more permanent,—one hardly likes to call

it the philosophy of the subject,—but to the reason of mankind, the causes and consequences of war and peace, the effect on nations of this conduct or of that, the history of the civilised world. Such a conspectus, which must in this place be exceedingly brief, will raise the principle of the Balance of Power to a position far beyond that of a mere invention or artificial system of a particular period, and will enable us to judge how far a transient abuse ought to weigh against permanent and legitimate usefulness. It need hardly be premised that such a method takes for granted the identity of human nature in all time. There is no reason to believe that, however the softening influences of civilisation and religion may affect mankind for the better, the causes of war and disturbance will ever cease to operate. Recent experiences certainly do not tend to lead us in that direction.

Let us begin with ancient history, and simply mentioning a fact or two, leave the rest to the judgment of the reader.

A Balance of Power can only exist in the midst of a system or cluster of free and independent communities; and of such systems we have but one ancient instance of which we know enough to make it of any use in this inquiry. They must necessarily be exceptional in ancient times. Their existence is analogous to that of Constitutional Governments. Such Governments only exist in any healthy condition where a people have worked them out through a

process of resistance to domestic or foreign tyrants—monarchical, oligarchical, or democratic, lay or ecclesiastical. A system of free and independent States can only exist after having gone through a similar process; and the Hellenic communities afford the one typical instance of such a system. Their history is never out of date; it may well be used for the lessons of to-day. Their close neighbourhood and confined extent made it impossible for them to avoid, if they would, the recognition of the principle of balance; and we need not stop to point out and enforce what may be learnt from their ultimate neglect of it. Hume, in his once well-known Essay on this subject, has drawn attention to the speeches of Demosthenes, as conveying in words the very doctrine which Europe has in modern times formulated. He might have quoted every page of Hellenic history as evidence of its inherent necessity. And surely we may admit that the periodical struggles of Athens and Sparta, of Thebes and Argos and Corinth, were better a thousand times than the dreary weight of Persian or Macedonian tyranny, or the political extinction which ensued upon the Roman absorption of a conquered world.

“Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.”

We have to pass over centuries before we can find another Greece. The voice of freedom is dumb. There is no Balance of Power to be found

under Rome, though the Teutonic tribes and the Parthians exercised a wholesome check on its too rapid development. Rome did its appointed work; it spread the fertilising influences of Greek and Italian civilisation, and then of Christianity, over vast families of men; and, finally, fell to pieces by its own weight. It had prepared society for the growth of Nationalities; but for some ages yet, these were too feeble, too barbarous, to dream of any common principle of action. It is not till after the Empire had received a quasi-revival under Charlemagne, and once more fallen to pieces, that we begin to trace some signs of such a principle. As France, Italy, Germany, and the Burgundies struggle with one another for boundary-lines and independent life; as the Feudal System gradually infuses the political principles of inherent rights, and the duty of lawful resistance to invasion of rights; as the Crusades deliver their legacy of mutual obligations and united action; as the Papal support of Imperialism—useful in its day—decays amidst the contempt of men, the principle gathers force. In two distinct and yet connected quarters it even acquires in the later Middle Ages some sort of form and recognition. In Germany and in Italy, the numerous principalities into which those countries were broken up and the various divisions of race and family of which they were composed necessitated the adoption of a system of balance not altogether wanting in scientific completeness. The Popes themselves, in playing off Germany

against Italy, in pitting France, or the Sicilian Normans, against Germany, had been, in fact, all through the Middle Ages, teaching the lesson. England and Spain, as the Middle Ages draw to a close, begin to assert their share in the affairs of the European family; and the Councils of the Fifteenth Century bring the nations of Western Europe, by representation, to a single spot for a common object.

At length the time arrives when Central and Western Europe present, on a larger scale, the very same picture which the States of Greece had presented so many ages before. We have now at last a community, and yet a mass of independent communities, connected by many ties, and yet separate and distinct in a thousand ways. Nationalities are now formed, rounded, and complete, each with a history of its own, in England, France, Spain, and Germany; each and all swelling with the impulses of the Renaissance and the Reformation; each producing its statesmen, and men of letters, and works of art; each organising more or less completely its international along with its national life. In the pages of Philip de Comines we learn how these international ties were interweaving themselves, even in the Fifteenth Century, with every political act in Western Europe. In Italy we find the Popes, no longer now the rivals of Emperors, but reduced to the level of petty Italian princes, applying themselves consciously and systematically to the task of exercising their old

functions within their narrower limits. Their policy was expressed by Paul the Fourth under the figure of a musical instrument with five strings, which required to be kept in perfect harmony, if the peace of Italy and the world were to be preserved. The five strings were the Papacy, Venice, Naples, Milan, and Florence. But Venice may be held to have preceded the Popes in international science, as we may gather from the luminous reports of their agents in our own and other Courts; and it was to Venice that the astute Louis the Eleventh turned for instructors in politics. Nor were the fellow-citizens of Machiavelli, with their wide-reaching commercial transactions in every State, behind their neighbours.

Hence when, with the opening of the Sixteenth Century, the old story is repeated, when a new Power, Persia, Macedonia, Rome in one, attempts to enslave a new Greece, Europe is in a state of preparation to resist. Universal monarchy rears its head once more in the person of Charles the Fifth. In the shifting phases of the resistance which he encountered, we discover a method and a system which accustom men to the scientific treatment of international politics as we now know the science, and establish the doctrine of the Balance of Power as the fundamental principle of free national existence. The successors to the place and plans of the mighty Charles, viz., his son Philip, Louis the Fourteenth, and the first Napoleon, exemplify the lesson that the doctrine having once

been formulated and accepted, can never again be expunged from the book of political life.

SECTION II.

Up to this time, however, if we may pursue the metaphor of Paul the Fourth, the notes of international harmony had been but the prelude, the "brisk awakening notes" to some elaborate air which was to be repeated with a thousand variations, and soon to vibrate throughout the world. Religion had not yet intervened, as the predestined element about to infuse an earnestness, a depth, and a variety, into the international system, which mere politics failed to afford. The Popes were, indeed, the accredited religious chiefs; but they had used their influence either for their own purposes to balance States against one another, or, in later times, for the nobler object of the liberation of Italy; and this influence had been used over peoples professing the same religion. The European Balance of Power, as we have known it since those times, hinged, at least for two centuries, as much on religious as on political considerations, if not more; and even in quite modern times the religious question has carried great weight in European combinations. In man's imperfect state of existence religion was to bring only partial and relative peace; to the world in general it was to be "not peace, but a sword." "Wars and rumours of wars" must arise not only

from the clash of legitimate interests, but from the strife of ambition. When that ambition is winged with the supposed sanctions of religion, and every passion is intensified in the furnace of theological bitterness, we may well hail the development of a principle which appeals to the profound instincts of freedom and self-preservation as a beneficent counterpoise. We may well ask the question,—What would Europe have been had not its education and its progress been controlled by these instincts?

The revolt from the Papacy, which we call the Reformation, struck the key-note. Men's minds became accustomed to the idea of religious as well as political independence. Europe would be dominated neither by the Papacy, nor by a secular prince, especially when he represented the predominance of the religious system which had received such a tremendous shock. The danger was imminent. Charles the Fifth had come into such a vast inheritance, and exhibited such a marvellous capacity for domination, that the infant nations found themselves in the presence of a monster which they must strangle at once, or perish. They accepted the issue and prevailed. Charles' seat is in the old Imperial centres; he makes and conquers Popes, he reduces to obedience refractory German princes, destroys the liberties of Spain, crushes the privileges of the Netherlands, combines the wealth of inherited grandeur with the products of the industrial centres of the age, the Old World with the New. Nor can he be said to have

neglected the duties of such a position. He held himself responsible for the preservation of Europe from the Mahometans. He led his own fleets against the growing navies of the common enemy. He attempted the settlement of the Reformation, insisted on the convocation of Church Councils, made what he considered just concessions to the Protestants; and, having so done, claimed a right to force his compromise on all alike. It was a grand conception, a profound failure.

It was not only that Charles had to deal with a new order of ideas, the force of which it was difficult for a contemporary to measure; two Powers, whose significance the great ruler had wholly failed to take into account, had now appeared on the stage—the Turks, and the Protestant princes of Germany. With all his sagacious statecraft he never, during his whole reign, understood how powerful was the advantage thus given to his natural antagonists—the King of France, the Pope (as a secular Prince), and the Italian States. It had never been dreamt of that a Christian Government should use the Mahometan intruder as an agent in effecting the Balance of Power; and yet the establishment of the Ottoman Empire was a solemn fact which could no longer be ignored. Christian Europe had stood tamely by, and seen it rear itself, slowly but irremovably, on the ruins of the Byzantine Empire. It had stolen into Europe at the weak moment when Imperialism was in decay and Nationalities not yet organised; but the followers of the false Prophet had

now as good a right as another—the right of conquest. How could they be left out of political combinations, either as friends or foes?

And that the Protestant States of Germany had, by the mere fact of their Protestantism, made the Empire an anachronism, an impossibility, this was a discovery which, in fact, produced the abdication of the mighty monarch. The Peace of Augsburg, coming immediately after his discomfiture at Innspruck, convinced him that his life-long, laborious work had failed. German Protestantism was beyond the reach of interference; the Turks were in possession of the greater part of Hungary; even France had wrested from Charles Metz, Toul, and Verdun. There was nothing left but to save the wreck—a splendid wreck, but not the world; not unity of faith, however hollow; and this task must be left to another. His own work was over.

It was France that had been the main agent in dispelling the dreams of Charles. By force and fraud, by a dexterous use of the new Powers—allying herself now with the Turks, now with the Protestant princes—she at last saw the work accomplished to which, for more than a generation, she had devoted herself; and though we may account for particular campaigns by special considerations, her persistent hostility was really due to the unerring instinct of self-preservation. Her north-eastern frontier was intolerably menaced by the aggrandisement of the lord of half the world, with his centre fixed in Germany and the Netherlands.

Such a Power, unchecked and unbalanced, was too near the vitals of France for safe neighbourhood. Necessity was the only justification for the ever-shifting alliances which did her fame no credit.

Thus religious energy—political necessity—presided over the struggle with which modern European history begins. Generations grew up accustomed to the operation of these forces in balancing the States of Europe. But the reduction of the principle to a scientific system is the debt Europe owes, not to France, but to England; not to Francis the First, or even Henry the Eighth, whose vain and capricious interferences between France and the Empire have been sometimes treated as if they had been the first conscious and effective efforts to balance the Powers of Europe, but to the great Queen Elizabeth, and to her able band of ministers. This may be gathered, not only from a review of her policy, but from indications in Sully's "*Memoirs*." In the prolonged duel between Elizabeth and Philip the Second, the victory was given to the champion of freedom and of Protestantism, armed with the weapons afforded by the general sense entertained of the need of a Balance of Power.

This crisis was even more terrible than the last. Without the vast and extended dominions of Charles the Fifth, Philip presented himself to the world of the Sixteenth Century as a far more deadly and ferocious enemy to the sacred cause of liberty. Unwearied, unchanging, unscrupulous, he was the incarnation

of the worst form of tyranny which had yet appeared through all the ages. He exhibited the *corruptio optimi* in its extreme development, the spectacle of sincere religious zeal, armed with ability and vast military resources, displaying itself in the forms of wholesale murder, torture, rapine, slavery, organised assassination. Against this terrible foe the Dutch, to their everlasting honour, being the people more immediately concerned, threw themselves into the breach; but it was England which guided the mighty conflict for the space of half a century, and brought it to a successful issue. By systematically playing off, one against the other, the two great Powers whose combination the world had then to fear, Elizabeth and her ministers saved not only England but the world.

The home policy of the great Queen was the basis of her foreign policy. To sum it up in a sentence, it was this—to isolate Scotland from Continental alliances, and pave the way for its union with England; to introduce English law and order into the Irish chaos; to foster the social and commercial prosperity of England. In short, Elizabeth may be said substantially to have made Great Britain what it is. Abroad, her policy was to prevent Protestantism, albeit not the form of it which she approved, from being crushed on the Continent, to prevent a coalition of the Papal Powers on the religious basis which Philip, the Popes, and the French League, were for ever attempting to lay

down ; to destroy the overwhelming influence of the prime mover of European politics, the Spanish despot—weaving from his office his spider-web ; to do just as much as was necessary for these purposes and no more. This also succeeded. She left Europe balanced. The spell which had so long hung around the House of Austria had been—at any rate for the time—dissolved. Philip, like his father, died broken-hearted at the failure of all his schemes ; the German branch of his House had found its interest in withdrawing itself from the affairs of Western Europe, and in strengthening itself against the Turks. The unity of France, on the basis of religious toleration, had been accomplished under English auspices. The Dutch had virtually established their independence, aided in no small degree by the naval warfare which England had waged against the forces of their oppressor. Spain had at length discovered its inherent weakness, and took up henceforth a secondary place in the affairs of the world.

Here, then, was the first indisputable result of a direct and conscious application of the new and yet ancient principle of political action. The tyranny of the great Romanist Powers, which had been continuously striving, ever since the Reformation, to win back by force of arms the position they had lost having been effectually checked for several years, the community of nations gained breathing-time. A general public opinion was

formed. The way was prepared for an organised resistance to the next attempt which was made to interfere with national and religious independence, that great high-water-mark of Jesuit aggressiveness, that concluding Act of the drama of the Reformation—the Thirty Years' War.

We need not dwell upon the marvellous development of abounding, vigorous life, which sprang forth during the war with Spain, as the natural fruit of liberty, in every nation which had acted a noble part in the struggle. Who shall say that there was one war too much, one life wasted, to secure such liberty, such progress? It was no wonder that the doctrine of the Balance of Power became rooted in the European mind. It was not for the mere pleasure of pulling down to a common level this high-placed potentate or that. What view of European combinations can be more absurd! The leagues of the oppressed could alone arrest the violence of the oppressor. Experience taught men that they should combine to prevent, if possible, rather than go through the agony of curing, the evil. Political foresight, far-seeing earnestness, and self-sacrifice, took the place of stupid indifference, and ignoble cowardice. The more sagacious political minds of Europe made note of the gains of the Sixteenth Century, and began to formulate the lessons which it had taught. The reign of Public Law had commenced.

SECTION III.

The Seventeenth Century witnessed the withdrawal of Great Britain from its place as the teacher of international politics to Europe. If some modern writers insist on the reversal of the course pursued under Elizabeth, Cromwell, William and Mary, Anne, and her successors, they are bound to state whether they approve of the peace-policy of those disastrous Stuart reigns which has been hitherto condemned by acclamation. In the appeal to history we cannot—to use the homely proverb—eat our cake and have our cake. If Great Britain and the world derived any advantage from the feeble policy which drew this country out of the balance of forces employed in the Thirty Years' War, or from the isolation produced by the shameful concurrence of Charles the Second and James the Second in Louis the Fourteenth's career of aggrandisement and spoliation, let it be proved. That policy was in very deed peace-at-any-price. Half the disasters which the world suffered then, and has suffered ever since, may be considered as the price. But into this we need scarcely enter here. If anything may be taken as ruled, this must certainly be so taken.

The great political minds of Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century were those of Sully, Henry the Fourth, Richelieu, and Mazarin. These were, indeed, all French, but they were in reality the pupils of Elizabeth, and took up the place vacated by

her feeble successors. Under them France directed the struggle of the nations, concluded at last by the great Peace of Westphalia. We should, of course, be entirely wrong if we were to credit these men, any more than Francis or Elizabeth, with a pure, unselfish regard for the welfare of Europe. All human motives are mixed. It was the interest and advantage of France—torn to pieces as she had been by religious wars, and for two generations unable to take a leading part against the House of Austria—which chiefly actuated these men; but they worked on a system which justified their acts; they planned for the whole community of Europe. It is remarkable and suggestive that just as Great Britain forfeited her place in this century as teacher and leader in Europe, so France, after having sustained and confirmed the Public Law for so many years, was destined to exhibit, in the later part of the century, the picture of the very evil which she had, in the earlier part, devoted herself to cure. After speaking by the politic lips of Sully, Henri Quatre, and Richelieu, she becomes the pest and scarecrow of Europe under Louis Quatorze. After that, from the more worthy successors of Elizabeth, is once more to come the teaching so urgently required.

The celebrated scheme connected with the name of Henri Quatre has only accidentally become the property of France. Sully's "Memoirs" plainly show that Elizabeth, and probably her ministers, had formed precisely the same ideas, which were

the result of the struggles of the Sixteenth Century, and the common property of the leading minds of the age, though the execution of them was reserved for the subtle and unscrupulous Richelieu. "It was a saying of Elizabeth," says Sully, "that nothing could resist the union of France, England, Sweden, and Denmark, when in strict alliance with each other." * Venice, however, saw the need of a strong France quite as soon as Elizabeth. That she, the first instructress of France in scientific politics, should be the first to welcome the recovery of that great nation after so long a prostration, the first to recognise Henri Quatre, is what we might expect.

Perhaps, as the whole principle of the Balance of Power is now attacked, not only in its modern application, but as to its essential wisdom, it may not be inopportune to quote once more the famous passage in which Sully expounds his marvellously advanced ideas of what ought to be the standing policy of France and Europe. It has long been the text of wise statesmen, and preceded the more scientific and pedantic forms of International Law. It has lost none of its significance:—

"France can no more depend on the English than on any of her other neighbours; her true interest and best policy is to render her own interior state and condition such as may make her not only entirely independent, but also able to compel all Europe to feel its want of her; and this, after all, would only be difficult to Ministers who can conceive no other methods to effect it than war and violence—methods that never ought to be pursued without an absolute neces-

* "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 408. Bohn's Series.

sity. But let the Sovereign show himself a lover of peace, disinterested in what regards himself, and strictly impartial with respect to others, he will then be certain of preserving all his neighbours in that dependence which alone is durable, because it conciliates the affections instead of subjecting the person. I dare further maintain, that peace is the great and common interest of Europe, the petty princes of which ought to be continually employed in preserving it between the greater Powers by all the most gentle and persuasive means : and the greater Powers should force the lesser into it, if necessary, by assisting the weak and oppressed : this is the only use they ought to make of their superiority. When I consider Europe as composed of such civilised people, I cannot but be astonished that she still continues to be governed by principles so narrow and customs so barbarous. What is the consequence of that profound policy of which she is so vain, other than her own continual laceration and ruin ? War is the resource in all places and on all occasions ; she knows no other way, or conceives no other expedients ; it is the sole resource of the most inconsiderable sovereign as well as of the greatest potentate ; the only difference between them is that the former makes it with less noise and in conjunction with others, while the latter does it with great preparation, and frequently alone, that he may show his grandeur, though in reality he only shows himself more signally despicable. Why must we always impose on ourselves the necessity of passing through war to arrive at peace, the attainment of which is the end of all wars, and is a plain proof that recourse is had to war only for want of a better expedient ? Nevertheless, we have so effectually confounded this truth, that we seem to make peace only that we may be able again to make war.”*

This passage lays down the law which Europe has ever since been attempting to carry into effect, the law that the great Powers should form a sort of Amphictyonic Council for the general welfare. Each must be powerful enough to be respected by its neigh-

* “Memoirs,” vol. ii. p. 352-3.

bours, and each intimately concerned with the external policy of every other. For this purpose each must be internally strong and well-ordered; or independence would be impossible. Thus each was to have an interest in the prosperity of the rest. Together they were to impose peace and harmony on the smaller States, to impose it by force. The corollary from this proposition was that war must necessarily take place if any one of the greater Powers became too powerful to be bound by the public opinion of the rest, and proceeded to absorb neighbouring States in contempt of the Public Law.

That this was the true rendering of the passage just quoted is evident from the fact that it is almost immediately followed by the elaborate scheme which the author had come to England, on two different occasions, to press, first upon Elizabeth, and then on James. There was much to be done before Europe could be brought into a state of equilibrium which would admit of an international Council; and the problem was depending on France and England for its solution. Though the strength of the Austrian House lay now in Germany rather than Spain, it still bore a fatal resemblance to the tyrannies which had been so successfully resisted in the previous century. Spain had not yet been taught to stoop to the recognition of the revolted Hollanders; the Jesuits had fastened with the grip of a vice on the broad territories and great populations of the dominant "faction;" the Emperors showed unmis-

takable signs of relinquishing their quiescent policy ; for the decay of the Ottoman Empire had already commenced. The world, according to Sully, was divided into "two factions." He and his comrade-king, indeed, clearly divined that the smaller would in the end prove far the strongest ; yet a thousand signs betrayed that the death-struggle was only about to begin. The forces of the Papal Powers were gathering for one last decisive effort.

On the one side were ranged, according to Sully, the Pope, the Emperor, Spain, Spanish Flanders, parts of Germany and Switzerland, Savoy, and almost all Italy. On the other were France, the British Isles, Denmark, Sweden, Venice, the United Provinces, and the other parts of Germany and Switzerland. "Poland, Prussia, Livonia, Muscovy, and Transylvania, I do not," says he, "take in." * They were too continuously engaged with the Turks and Tartars to be included in the system of the Western Powers. The balance was as yet of the West and Centre. The Ottoman Empire was at this time withdrawn from the European balance, which it had at first seriously affected, by the growing strength of Persia, and by the gradual emergence of the North-Eastern Powers, which began to form, along with Turkey, a rude balance of their own. It took another century to bring these Powers up into line with their Western neighbours.

The minute and artificial arrangement, by which

* "Memoirs," vol. ii. pp. 405-6.

the smaller faction was to be balanced against the larger, carried with it its own condemnation; and as if to demonstrate the pettiness of individual man, in contrast with the mighty conceptions of his genius, the hero, whose whole career seemed to be an education for the post of leader in the approaching conflict, was struck down by an assassin at the very moment when he was commencing his forward movement. But the central policy of Henry the Fourth, that of humbling the House of Austria for the protection of France, of European freedom, and of Protestantism, was completed by other hands.

Under Richelieu, the hero-King's maxims found practical expression. Having at length accomplished the unification of France, the Cardinal bent his marvellous powers to the task of matching the Jesuits. The sword of Gustavus, the talents of the Swedish generals who succeeded that hero, were but instruments in his skilful hands. The disasters of England, which had refused to take up her natural position on the side of freedom, owed their impulse, if not their origin, to his policy. If she would not assist in the work, she should have employment enough to keep her from interference. The Protestant princes of Germany, who must certainly have succumbed had it not been for the French intervention, were thus saved. The Peace of Westphalia, by which Mazarin brought the mighty struggle to a close, marked the progress made during the century and a half which had elapsed since the Reformation. Religious free-

dom was henceforth recognised and guaranteed. Holland and Switzerland were at last definitively placed in an independent position amongst the nations. A new era in the policy and public law of Europe was ushered in. The Balance of Power for which the 'Thirty Years' War was waged, was now established on a footing which became a fresh starting-point for Europe, and which indeed, in its main outlines, has never been overthrown.

The central and pregnant defect in this momentous settlement was the too great aggrandisement of France, caused by the absence of Great Britain from her place in Continental politics. Of the nations which had as yet taken part in those politics, she alone was unrepresented. France thus obtained the gratification of that fatal ambition which Henry the Fourth had left as his legacy, the inclusion of many of the smaller German States on the banks of the Rhine. The existence of small Sovereign States on both sides of those banks was a dangerous one for themselves, but a safeguard for Europe. The Emperor Frederick the Third would have done well had he allowed Charles the Bold in the Fifteenth Century to erect them, along with Flanders, into a kingdom large enough to take care of itself. There was a feeble attempt, after Marlborough's victories in 1706, to renew that policy ; but the opportunity had been lost, and Europe has suffered from the loss ever since.

It was on this basis of French preponderance

that Louis the Fourteenth built up his colossal power. It only required time and ability, during the abeyance of British influence, to make this power as formidable as that from which Europe had been delivered. As long as Great Britain counted for nothing—and it is to be observed that even the exceptional vigour of Cromwell's Protectorate was exercised in favour of France—when Sweden had collapsed in consequence of efforts out of proportion to her natural strength, and while the Austrian House was paralysed after the great war, the Balance of Power was left to take care of itself. The Triple Alliance of Charles II. for a moment checked the progress of the tyranny, but means were soon found to suppress Louis' ignoble pensioner. "The great monarch" grew year by year: one success after another placed him, as he thought, beyond the reach of adversity. Pretexts were found for reducing each neighbour in turn. Europe looked on aghast and helpless. It has seldom presented a more pitiable spectacle. But, happily for the world, the principles which had effected the Peace of Westphalia were only dormant. Once more the magnificent resistance of Holland saves Europe; once more Great Britain is brought on the stage to direct the general movement of the nations, at last aroused to a sense of their danger. Under William, the champion and foremost representative of the Balance of Power, under Marlborough—(for we need not in this sketch separate the two wars)—the scattered

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forces of the European Coalition are combined, and the tyrant, who has broken the Public Law of Europe, is at last reduced to his proper dimensions.

We need not linger over the very alphabet of history to prove that France, absorbing, by "reunions" and similar processes, all the States on her Eastern frontier, supreme in Spain and Italy, perhaps in England, and ruled in the spirit which dictated the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the Dragonnades, would have been a monster against which the world must have combined sooner or later. We need not speculate how the deliverance might have been effected; whether the shattering force would have sprung from some earlier "French Revolution" in exhausted France, or some earlier advent of Teutonic and Slavonic kingdoms to political power. We need not stop to criticise the Peace of Utrecht, by which this "greatest and most general conflict since the Crusades" was at last terminated. It is enough to observe that the members of the system of States at that time existing, not retiring selfishly within their own limits, did at last the duty which lay before them; though of course there was, as ever, an abundance of selfishness displayed, and the usual infusion of mixed motives. On the whole, and on the whole persistently, these Powers recognised their public duty to Europe as a Confederation of Nations which could alone exist in harmony under the condition of a Balance of Power.

And it may also be worth observing that the nations which most honourably fulfilled their part appear to have prospered in something very like a due proportion to their merits. It would of course be presumptuous to dwell too much upon this point, for human eyes are scarcely able to measure causes and consequences with sufficient accuracy; but the start in advance made by Great Britain, which had proved herself more than a match for France and Spain united, and now began to spread her language and institutions throughout the world; the prosperity of Holland, no longer indeed a great Power, but henceforth the adopted child of Europe; the ever-onward history of Prussia, which earned its place amidst the nations by its adhesion to the public cause; the fortunes of Austria, which were prosperous just as far as she showed public spirit, and lost ground just as far as she pursued the selfish policy of aiming at the place from which she had helped to depose Louis; the fate of Bavaria, which handed on the tradition of the part she then played to later generations; the downward course of France, checked for a time by her successes under the first Napoleon; these retrospects are at least suggestive.

Nor shall we be the less inclined to appreciate the merits of this second great settlement of Europe, the first to embody its object in set words—"ad conservandum in Europa æquilibrium," if we reflect not only how it has left the system of smaller States as barriers and cushions between the larger, with the

independence of each guarded by common agreement, down to our own times, but that it was followed by a general peace throughout Europe and the world for twenty-five years, and was then only unequal to the task of preserving the Balance of Power, because two new Powers, not yet taken into account, had risen to the first rank. So much must certainly be placed to the credit of the political doctrine which it represented. And it may be noticed in addition that, after all, the years of peace in Europe from the Treaty of Utrecht to the French Revolution were nearly thrice as numerous as those of war.

Thus at the end of two centuries, during which England and France had worked out in turns the principles of Public Law, those principles appear in formal and express terms. Two subsequent facts may be traced to this circumstance. An erroneous opinion has prevailed that the Balance of Power is no older than the Eighteenth Century, an artificial product of a corrupt age; whereas we have seen that it had a very different origin. This is chiefly important as to the evils which may arise from contempt of the doctrine, ensuing upon a low conception of its history. And again, it cannot be denied that the very formulation of the doctrine and its familiar recognition have suggested formal and dishonest methods of evading it, while the abuses which have occurred in consequence have tended to its discredit. - It is in the history of the Eighteenth Century that we discern the growth of these abuses; but we shall

still find them exceptional, and only requiring a little discrimination to assign them their true place.

SECTION IV.

The Eighteenth Century ushered in two fresh members of the great family of ruling nations; Prussia, whose "Elector of Brandenburg" was now a King, and which alone of the German Powers (besides the Emperor) had attached her signature to the Peace of Utrecht; and Russia, whose rise had been less marked, and which was somewhat later in affecting the West. Both had risen on the ruin of Poland and the decay of Sweden. Both burst on the West as Powers that must be reckoned with, through the fact of their each producing a man who towered above all his fellows, much in the same way as Charlemagne and Napoleon towered above theirs. Perhaps since the death of the first of those extraordinary men the course of events had not been so much guided by the personal will of an individual as it was by Peter the Great, and in the next generation by Frederick the Great. The sanguinary wars, which must be regarded as the necessary consequence of having to find a place for the new Powers in the European system, afford sad reflections for the philanthropist; but some compensation at least may be found in the assistance given by both nations to the assertion of the Balance of Power in the great wars arising out of the French

Revolution. Up to that date, indeed, the general principles of Public Law, though exceptionally overborne, were generally admitted, and often successfully appealed to; and the landmarks of the Peace of Utrecht remained almost as they had been fixed in 1713. •

The general peace of Europe was first disturbed by Frederick the Great's high-handed seizure of Silesia; it was the signal for the two fierce wars out of which Prussia emerged as one of the five leading Powers. Except for this attack on Maria Theresa, it seems probable that the Pragmatic Sanction, that careful attempt to anticipate a general unsettlement of the balance, would have been observed. But the temptation to France, Bavaria, and other Powers, when the strife had once begun, to possess themselves of the territories of the Austrian House was too great, and all pretence of war for the Balance of Power was for a time abandoned. The Pragmatic Sanction, indeed, like William's Partition Treaties, laboured under the serious defect that it was not, any more than they were (nor in their nature could they be), the joint product of all the Powers concerned. For these big new boys, if such a metaphor may be allowed, entering a school in which the old rules take scant account of new-comers, a general fight all round seemed the only way of securing proper respect.

If any nation could make a claim to honour for having acted at this time up to the principles of

Public Law, Great Britain, though much influenced by special interests in Hanover, may receive praise for her conduct. Hers was at least an effort to do what was right in support of the injured Queen, whose destruction would certainly have deranged the balance. And it was equally right and politic, in spite of all that had happened, to throw the weight of England, in the Seven Years' War, into the scale of Prussia. In both cases France, which was quietly but rapidly creeping back into the position she had occupied before the Peace of Utrecht, was paralysed by the action of Great Britain; and the two central Teutonic peoples of Europe were, in the end, preserved and strengthened in their rank of first-rate Powers. France reaped the fruit of her crooked policy in the loss of her colonies and the increase of her debt, which had an important effect in producing the Revolution; while Great Britain rose to the headship of Europe, and steadily advanced her colonies and commerce to such a degree as to make the increase of her debt a matter of small consequence. The only nation, in short, which could make the slightest pretence to having acted for the general good made the greatest gain.

The Partition of Poland by Russia, Austria, and Prussia, which comes next in order, has been universally condemned as the greatest abuse of the doctrine of the Balance of Power which had ever taken place up to that time. It has rightly earned this ill fame inasmuch as it has been, immediately or

remotely, the pretext for wars which have occurred since. These three Powers, while they had learnt to respect one another's strength in the Seven Years' War, had also learnt to watch one another with intense jealousy; nor were any of them governed at this moment on any but the most selfish and unprincipled policy. Nothing can be more revolting than the parade of justice, and the cant about the Balance of Power, under cover of which this spoliation was effected. The partition of Poland was, indeed, no new idea. The Poles had been long a decaying nationality in the midst of powerful and more barbarous neighbours. More than a century before, the Emperor Leopold and the Elector of Brandenburg had been grievously suspected by the Poles of a similar conspiracy. France, whose connection with Poland had been so intimate, was too distant to afford by herself effectual aid, nor was either she or Great Britain able at this time to unite in resisting a league of the three conquering Powers. They abdicated their functions; and thus, with all the lessons of the previous period for warning, a process the exact reverse of that which had given security to Western Europe took place in the East. Instead of the great Powers uniting to protect the small, and leaving barriers and cushions to take off the friction with each other, they either united to erase the smaller Powers, or looked on with complacency while it was being done. The sense of shame with which the Partition has been since regarded

is, in itself, a tribute to the progress of Public Law, to the growth of an international conscience.

It was this fatal Partition of Poland which supplied Napoleon Bonaparte with a pretext, and in too many eyes a justification, for his similar iniquitous incorporation of independent States. His avowed policy may be expressed thus:—"You have weighed down the balance by your proceedings in the East of Europe; I must redress it in the West,"—a claim as specious and unprincipled as that which he denounced; but bad precedents make bad consequences. And we have heard the same accents from more than one quarter in our own time, self-asserted claims by an interested party on pretence of preserving the Balance of Power; whereas the very essence of a true use of the doctrine is that the nations shall together judge of the infraction of the public law by any one of them, and act in concert to prevent it. But what is to be done when the conspirators are too strong for the police? This is a question which it is not easy to answer: it is certainly not answered by shutting the eyes to facts. One thing is certain. Retribution is sure to follow, heavy retribution, on the offenders; but the lookers-on will not escape. "No one" says Ranke, speaking of an earlier period, "goes unpunished who stands aside in moments when the duty of action is laid imperatively on all."*

* "History of England," vol. v. p. 14. Oxford Translation.

From these instances of abuse, which we may justly claim should be considered exceptional by the side of the vast preponderance of useful application of the principle, it is a relief to turn to the Coalition of Europe against France in the wars of the Revolution. In the military propagandism of that movement, and in the subsequent unblushing ambition of Napoleon, are to be found—if ever there were found—the just grounds for a combination of Powers against a disturber of the peace. We must give up altogether the formation of historical judgments, if we are to allow the presence of mixed motives and the perpetration of mistakes to interfere with our approval of a course which is, on the whole, just and right. The question was one of self-defence, self-preservation, public duty, in the cause of those who would otherwise have been overwhelmed; and if we require any confirmation of the ideas of right and wrong which we may have formed as to the actors in that tremendous conflict, if consequences afford any ground of judgment as to events, it can hardly be denied that public respect and influence, internal progress and tranquillity, have rewarded the nations concerned, in a wonderfully exact proportion to the public virtue they exhibited. Great Britain at any rate, in spite of her debt, has reason to comprehend the verdict of events.

The Treaty of Vienna, which, like those of Westphalia and Utrecht (the results of former coalitions to preserve public law), gave peace to the

world for so many years, may have been by this time torn to pieces ; but it has carried down to our own day the authoritative teaching of the previous centuries. That teaching may be summed up in a single sentence. It is the duty of the members of the European Commonwealth to act together, and not independently, in their mutual relations ; and that all should take concerted action against any aggressive member of the Commonwealth ; not shrinking from self-sacrifice, still less proclaiming the craven doctrine that the affairs of its neighbours are no concern of any particular State. That any such theory could have found acceptance, is probably due to the confusion of thought which has mixed up the just condemnation of a meddling intervention in the internal affairs of States, with a most unjust condemnation of the international right to guard against external danger arising from the menacing aggrandisement of a State or States. To prevent aggression and the conquest of the weaker Powers by means of alliances, remonstrances, conferences, arbitration if possible, but, in the last resort, war, is the duty incumbent on the European family of nations ; to interfere with each other's internal affairs is to strike at the root of their common brotherhood. It is not surprising that the interventions of the "Holy Alliance" in the affairs of States should have been succeeded by the agencies of an opposite kind which Great Britain for many years encouraged. It was all wrong ; it has been

condemned by public opinion, and has passed away : not so the fundamental obligations of Public Law.

A few words must suffice to gather up the instances of use or abuse of the Balance of Power as a doctrine applied in our own generation. Greece and Belgium have been treated by Europe on the old-established principle of common action. The annexation of Savoy and Nice, and the case of Denmark, have afforded instances of neglect or abuse of the principle. The "Eastern Question," in relation to the decline and anarchy of the Ottoman Empire, has been a yet more important instance, and is still awaiting the action of to-day, the judgment of the to-morrow of history. The policy of Europe in 1840 may fairly be reckoned among the legitimate triumphs of concerted action. The Crimean War, if it did not indeed combine the whole confederacy in a manner creditable to all, yet at least asserted with success the principle, that the party interested in obtaining the spoils should not be entrusted with the execution of the common policy. The adoption of this principle also secured the success of the later policy of 1866, in Syria. These last are the questions with which Great Britain has been obliged to deal, in consequence of her commercial and colonial position, and the existence of her Indian Empire. Whether she has been right in retiring altogether from her old place in relation to the Continental struggles of France, Italy, Germany, and Austria, remains

to be seen. In the American struggle it could not, of course, be maintained that Europe should have interfered. It was not a case for the application of the Balance of Power.

One thing is clear. There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that Great Britain, having attained her present grand position, can fall back on her insular situation as an excuse for political retirement. She has gained that position as an integral part of the European community by centuries of action; and it is acknowledged on all hands that there are Continental contingencies which might even now compel her to draw the sword. That admission opens up the larger questions suggested by political foresight and political retrospect, the whole question of the Balance of Power, and concerted action backed if necessary by war. It is quite a work of supererogation to prove that the liabilities, duties, and dangers of the position have not diminished by the lapse of time or the improvements of mechanical art, by the progress of steam and the telegraph on sea and land, the elaboration of artillery, or the invention of torpedoes. The so-called "insular policy" may seek for a spurious justification in the aspirations after peace and progress which flourish with increasing civilisation; but those who have followed the course of this argument will probably be unanimous in agreeing that it is as great a crime, as great an abuse or neglect of the Balance of Power, for any

nation forming part of the great European system to separate itself from the general community, on a private interpretation of its own interest in non-intervention, as it is for a nation to act on a private interpretation of the Public Law for aggressive purposes, apart from the rest of Europe.

It is impossible to dwell at length in this place upon the confirmation of the above views afforded by the authorities on International Law. It will be enough to make a few references, and leave the rest to the student. They shall be taken from recent authors, one from each of the nations which at present contribute most effectually to the progress of the science, German, French, American, and English:—

“True equilibrium,” says the distinguished German, M. Bluntschli, “consists in the pacific coexistence of different States. It is threatened when one State acquires such a supremacy that the safety, independence, and liberty of the other States are endangered. In such a case, all the States directly or indirectly threatened are authorised to re-establish the equilibrium, and to take measures to insure its maintenance.”*

“If it should happen,” said M. Pradier Fodéré, “that a nationality be threatened, since Europe echoes the cry of every people, and since no movement is indifferent to each and all, intervention would be not a right, but a duty in the name of humanity.”†

“The Balance of Power,” says Mr. Woolsey, President of Yale

* “Le Droit International Codifié.” Par M. Bluntschli. P. 95. Paris, 1870.

† “Principes Généraux de Droit,” &c. Par M. P. Pradier Fodéré. Paris, 1869.

College, in the United States, "may be said to be an established part of the international law of Europe."*

"The principle of the Balance of Power," says Sir Robert Phillimore, "has been, upon several occasions of great importance, most formally and distinctly recognised as an essential part of the system of international law." It does not require that nations retain exactly their present territorial possessions, "but that no single Power should be allowed to increase them in a manner which threatens the liberties of other States." And he denounces the folly and shortsightedness of "vulgar politicians who hold the doctrine that a State has no concern with the acts of her neighbour, and that if wrong be done to others and not to herself, she cannot afford to interfere. . . . It is the right of third Powers to watch over the preservation of the Balance of Power among existing States, whether by preventing the aggressions and conquests of any one Power, or by taking care that out of the new order of things produced by internal revolutions no existing Power acquires an aggrandisement that may menace the liberties of the rest of the world."†

"Since," says (at an earlier date) Nassau Senior, "the principal States of Continental Europe,—France, Russia, Austria and Prussia,—have grown from small beginnings to powerful and flourishing monarchies by centuries of ambition, injustice, violence, and fraud, it is obvious that the attempt to bind nations by mere moral sanctions is to fetter giants with cobwebs. But when a nation perceives a probability that it will be resisted [in its attacks on the rights of weaker nations], and a possibility that it may fail, the check is powerful."‡

To those who have accepted the dogmatic statements, passed on from one to another in newspapers, reviews, and periodicals of late years, to the effect that the whole doctrine of the Balance

* Woolsey's "Introduction to the Study of International Law," p. 61. Second Edition. New York, 1869.

† Phillimore's "International Law," vol. i. pp. 473—510. Second Edition, 1871.

‡ "Edinburgh Review," April, 1843.

of Power is obsolete and absurd, it may be a surprise to find, not only that such passages as the above abound in the best modern treatises on International Law and politics, but that a popular writer, of strong Liberal principles, like M. Laveleye, finds himself obliged to admit that the doctrine has been necessary for progress and liberty, and only asserts or predicts its decline on grounds of a somewhat fanciful character.* It is at least suspicious when the writers of the nation which supposes it to be its interest to vote the doctrine obsolete are so little supported from outside. It cannot but suggest the idea of a disgraceful and self-condemning heresy. The Americans, indeed, have given some countenance to this superficial view, but the passage cited above from Mr. Woolsey's popular work may almost be matched by passages from Wheaton, who stands at the head of American authors on International Law. He at least justifies upon this principle all the chief wars which have been waged in Europe.† He could hardly do otherwise in the face of passages such as the following, which we quote from Burke:—

“The Balance of Power has been ever assumed as the known common law of Europe at all times and by all Powers ; the question has only been (as it must happen) on the more or less inclination of the balance. . . . In all those systems of balance, England was

* “Des Causes actuelles de guerre en l'Europe et de l'arbitrage.” Par Emile de Laveleye. Chap. v. Brussels and Paris, 1873.

† Wheaton's “International Law.” Eighth Edition, p. 92 *et seq.*

the Power to whose custody it was thought it might be most safely committed."*

If we cite one more authority it shall be that of by far the greatest historian of this age, Von Ranke. What that profound and truly erudite mind pronounces to be "necessary to the existence of the States of Europe"† can hardly deserve contempt. He who has written the history of the chief nations of Europe as no one else has written them, makes no limitation of time in this matter. The principle has existed, does exist, and must exist. "One of the causes," says he, "which enable the European commonwealth to maintain itself as a living whole is that there are active forces latent within it which have always hitherto restored the Balance of Power when disturbed."‡ It is his survey of the past which gives him hope for the future. It would, indeed, be strange if the people of the country which has taken the lead in this matter, paid the greatest price, achieved the greatest results, and has the largest stake in the preservation of the principle, should be precisely the people whose aid was found wanting in the production of those "latent active forces" on which the veteran historian and philosopher relies.

* "Third Letter on a Regicide Peace," p. 196.

† "History of England," vol. iv. p. 385.

‡ Ibid. p. 384.

APPENDIX II.

RISE OF THE MODERN BRITISH EMPIRE UNDER GEORGE THE SECOND.

SECTION I.

THE German philosopher, A. H. Müller, has remarked “that the vast combination of interests which constitutes the British Empire demands a whole lifetime to be adequately understood;” and he recommends the learner “to study the writings of Burke, in which this combination would be found concentrated and reflected as in a mirror.” Perhaps the following passage from Burke himself may serve still better as a text for the following sketch:—

“For my part I look upon the Imperial rights of Great Britain, and the privileges which the Colonists ought to enjoy under those rights to be just the most reconcilable things in the world. The Parliament of Great Britain is at the head of her extensive Empire in two capacities, one as the local legislature of this island, providing for all things at home immediately, and by no other instrument than the executive power; the other, and I think her nobler capacity, is what I may call her Imperial character, in which, as from the throne of heaven, she superintends all the several inferior legislatures, and guides and controls them all, without annihilating any.”*

It must be admitted that there is a genuine ring about these characteristic lines. Let us note the

* “Burke; Select Works.” Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by E. J. Payne, M.A., Fellow of University College, Oxford. New Edition. Oxford, 1878. “Speech on American Taxation,” Vol. i. p. 156.

echo which, at the interval of more than a century, the British Colonies gave back only yesterday, at a moment when it seemed as if the mother country would be obliged, in the defence of public law, to evoke the patriotic spirit of the whole Empire. Addressing, in his happiest vein, a vast multitude of Canadians, who testified their exuberant loyalty by continuous cheering, Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General, found himself under no necessity for apology or explanation when he hailed them as "members of the Empire, men of British descent, subjects of Queen Victoria," and announced that it might soon "be necessary for them to face the responsibility which their nationality entailed." He was using no empty language, for, said he, "almost every mail had brought the most enthusiastic offers to serve in the Queen's armies in the event of foreign war, and these offers had represented not merely the enthusiasm of individuals, but of whole regiments and brigades of men." Nor was this an exceptional and peculiar case. From all parts of the world arose the same multitudinous shout. Even the Indian Sepoys, so far from remembering with ill-will the decisive issue of their terrible mutiny some twenty years ago, demanded with vehement cries to be led against the common foe, and desired to know no more than that they were going to "fight by the side of the English somewhere in the West."

And yet, with all this experience, this encouragement from the past and present alike, this hope for

the future, little progress seems to be made in allaying the fears and discontents of a very large section of the British people. Still are heard from the lips of public men the most unworthy expositions of British foreign policy; still, with an air of philosophical authority, men warn us against concerning ourselves with the affairs of the Continent; we are still recommended to relinquish this Colony, or that military post, for fear of offending sensitive neighbours, or being called upon to engage in the defence of our dependencies; we are still told to measure our obligations by the mere calculations of profit and loss—calculations not only illusory and temporary in themselves, but utterly inadequate to bear the weight of the vast issues requiring to be balanced. Too many seem to realise Burke's glowing denunciation of those whom he calls "vulgar politicians":—

"A large, liberal, and prospective view of the interests of States passes with them for romance, and the principles that recommend it for the wanderings of a disordered imagination. Littleness in object and in means, to them appears soundness and sobriety. They think there is nothing worth pursuit but that which they can handle, which they can measure with a two-foot rule, which they can tell upon ten fingers." *

Such ideas would seldom obtain currency if it were not for the misrepresentation of which the public are the victims in the ordinary methods of accounting for the Rise of the Modern British Empire. In historical references to the last century writers are in the habit of indulging a mock-humility:.

* "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," p. 105.

they carry their candour to an absurd extent, and for fear of indulging in national self-laudation and incurring a charge of so-called "Chauvinism," put on sackcloth and ashes, when they should array themselves in purple and gold. Such treatment of the past is not only false, as well as unjust to the great men who founded the Empire, it is most pernicious in its effects on the national conduct. Let us, then, take a brief survey of the events which led to the attainment of the British position, and analyse some of the influences which had a share in producing those events. Greatness may become more tolerable if the steps which led to it are measured with a little more than ordinary care. We cannot always, indeed, accept Burke's guidance to the letter, but no one can be far wrong in adopting the spirit of his teaching. To use his words once more, let us attempt to "point out by what means the British nation came to be exalted above the vulgar level, and to take that lead which they assumed among mankind."* What would he have said to the absurd nicknames which are now supposed to cover such views as his with contempt and ridicule?

And, first, a few general remarks on the much-abused Eighteenth Century, the condemnation of which, without much discrimination, is so glibly pronounced in the present day. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the tendency of modern literature is to

* "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," p. 64.

impress us with the belief that the less said about that century the better. We are to regard it as an era of clumsy, vulgar, uncultured life, stagnant life, most uninteresting by the side of the Stuart, Tudor, and Plantagenet periods of English history, scarcely indeed deserving the attention of historians. The reigns of "the four Georges" have been most bitterly satirised by Mr. Thackeray, writing much in accordance with prevailing sentiment, in the persons of those Sovereigns. We have come to feel ashamed of sympathy, not only with the rulers, but with the people over whom they ruled.

This estimate of the last century is surely as unfounded as it is unfair. We may trace the growth of the false sentiment partly to the extraordinary development of our modern material prosperity, to the rapid course of improvement in all departments of social and political life which has been going on under the eyes of the last two generations, and which has obscured the true perception of the preceding men and times. Perhaps also something may be attributed to the solidity of the barrier between our own age and the earlier years of George the Third, formed by the tremendous period of the Revolution Wars which lie midway. The energies of the race were then so severely taxed, the whole body politic was so deeply scored and coloured, that those engrossing years throw back into dim distance what is indeed only the time of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Yet it cannot be

denied that the British people are in every point and circumstance just what they shaped out. If Englishmen are to comprehend the relations in which they stand to the world around them, however useful their earlier history may be, it is to the time which stretches behind the barrier of the Revolution Wars that they must go for the assistance with which they can on no account dispense.

And, lastly, our writers for special classes must bear some part of the blame. In order to magnify the theological reforms and revivals of the present day, it has become a sort of cant to cry down the Eighteenth Century, as if we were so very much superior to our immediate ancestors; and this prejudice propagates itself, and is often unconsciously propagated, through a great variety of channels. Philosophers like Mr. Leslie Stephen are just as bad in their way.* The people of that age were too stupid, we are told, to follow, as they should have done, their intellectual leaders in the paths of Free Thought! There could not be a better sign of their intelligence.

It will not indeed be denied that the early Hanoverian period has largely deserved its evil fame. The political circumstances attending the change of dynasty could not but operate disastrously. The measures absolutely necessary for the establishment of the new Royal Family and for the repression of Jacobitism in Church and State, the corruption of

* "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," *passim*.

Parliament, the absence of effective party-conflict, the furious quarrels at Court, and the degraded domestic life of the first two Sovereigns of the House, the sense of a lowered position amidst the rising Powers of the Continent, and especially of the revival of enemies over whom the British had so recently triumphed,—no doubt all this, with much more which might be reckoned up, if not too tedious for the present sketch, deeply felt at the time, and reflected on our own minds, has contributed to form that disagreeable impression which is generally entertained of the earlier period. But even this period had its all-important place in eliciting the true position of Great Britain; and we must take the utmost care not to confuse it with the period embracing the later years of George the Second and the reign of George the Third, during which the foundations of the Modern British Empire were securely laid.

No Englishman can forget the earlier glories of his country's eventful history; but it is not too much to say that she did not permanently emerge out of the position of a second-rate Power, into the first rank among the nations, till the Eighteenth Century. At previous times she had for awhile grandly supported this pretension; but for the last hundred and twenty years, for some four generations, her place has been steadily fixed and universally acknowledged. How was it attained? We can scarcely remain satisfied with the common answer to this question. It is not sufficient merely to recal the greatness of

Chatham and of the galaxy of fine officers whose prowess he called forth. In a very rough way, for mere summaries written for schools, this will be sufficient. Great men arose at a critical moment, and their deeds will go down to posterity along with those of Greek and Roman heroes. But great, original, world-influencing as they were, these men must also be regarded as subordinate agents in that general course of affairs which, commencing with a very few obvious considerations, necessary by way of introduction, we will now trace.

No monarchy has ever made any considerable advance during a period of disputed Succession. It can undertake no great operations at home or abroad ; it is happy, truly happy, if it can move in the beaten track with tolerable tranquillity, if the people can be induced to follow their national bent without creating disturbances, if peace with its neighbours can be preserved almost at any price. This was the state of Great Britain for more than a generation after the advent of the House of Hanover ; and considering that this was the normal condition of things at the period, the country, it must be admitted, was admirably served both by her Sovereigns and statesmen. Whatever might be the deficiencies of the first two Georges, they had that primary requisite of common sense which teaches people to conform to their situation ; and, without mentioning other ministers, must allow that Walpole was of all men the most exactly suited to the

times. To speak of these men as virtuous kings or lofty statesmen would be absurd: the point is that they at that time filled the exact place which the country required. She deserved, and she could obtain nothing better. The large majority of the people were Tories at heart and Jacobites in sentiment; they were restrained from active efforts in behalf of the exiled family solely by their inbred Protestantism, the strongest ingredient of all in the national character. It was therefore absolutely necessary, and the people themselves knew it, that they should be governed on Whig principles, ruled by the great families which had happily brought about the Revolution and the new Succession, swayed by the Dutch, the Hanoverian, the "moneyed" interests, intolerable as they were from the romantic, sentimental point of view, but tolerable as the necessary bulwark of Protestantism, and round which in the last resort the people were prepared to rally.

Moreover, the Government, with its policy of peace and commerce, conciliated the people by what they best understood and required after the wars of the preceding reigns. Trade and commerce had indeed flourished in spite of those wars; but time and rest were needed to develop the resources which the nation was only gradually discovering that it possessed. It entered upon its new course with characteristic ardour. The inflated speculations which issued in the "South Sea Bubble" were but indications of the general prosperity; the

subsequent rearrangement of the public finances, conducted with such splendid skill by Walpole, was the commencement, in its more exact form, of that settled system of funded debt under which we now live, and by means of which the country has so often met its national requirements. By the year 1729, so entirely had public confidence rallied round the King and his dexterous Minister, that the real contest among the public creditors was as to who should be last paid. In short, the country settled down to its work; the British nation became, as Napoleon called it at a later date, a nation of shopkeepers. That long lull in home and foreign politics left an indelible mark, worn in the deeper with ever-growing years.

But the Continental Powers soon found themselves in error when they presumed upon the change which appeared to have come over the islanders, whose fierce and turbulent nature had been their chief characteristic in the pages of history. When Spain, slowly recovering from the wounds of the War of Succession, and encouraged by her secret "Family Compact" with France; when the latter country, profiting by her long peace with England, had at last, under the consummate management of Cardinal Fleury, gained the long-coveted prize of Lorraine; when these hereditary enemies of England, whose separation from one another it had been her policy for centuries to secure, combined to dispute with her once for all the empire of the seas and the commerce

of Asia, Africa, and America—then it was that, slowly and sullenly rousing herself, shaking off one by one the chains which had so long fettered her, this country made that bound to Imperial greatness which we may indeed, in one sense, connect with its ancient glories, but which, taken by itself, is the product of little more than one century's magnificent enterprise.

The first thing that strikes us in connection with this fact is that the impulse proceeded from the people themselves, the very same people who had appeared to coincide with the Government in the peace-policy of so many years. The "fable of Captain Jenkins' ear" has become a sort of synonym for the credulity and political folly of the multitude. Burke himself has endorsed this view; but it is one of the points on which we are not bound to follow him. He tells us that "the people were inflamed to this measure by the most leading politicians, by the first orators, and the greatest poets of the time"—Bolingbroke, Pope, Johnson, Glover. "It was a war of plunder."*

Had Burke lived a little further away from the time of which he wrote, and thus been enabled to take a larger sweep of history, he might have given a different verdict. There might have been much to blame in detail; "Jenkins' ear" may have been a fable; but as calling forth and representing the resolute will of the British people that they would no longer put up with the claim of Spain to exclude their commerce from South and Central America, from

* "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," p. 53.

the Pacific Ocean, from the islands of the East and West Indies, the cry had a most profound significance, as well as a serious justification. Like the Sacheverel Riots, which, however disgraceful, proclaimed the settled will of the English people to support Church and Queen; like the Gordon Riots, which, still more disgraceful as they were, yet represented the resolution of the English and Scotch to protect the existing Protestant safeguards,—so the cry for war with Spain, which Walpole obstructed, decried, and then meanly adopted, with ruinous consequences to himself, was no idle offspring of misplaced sentiment or criminal covetousness. It was the result of a profound instinct and steady conviction, which made way against all obstacles, and deserved to open up the path, as it did, to immense issues.

It was not known till some time afterwards how entirely this warlike impulse was justified by the secret existence of the above-mentioned Treaty,* the precursor of the more famous Family Compact, by which the Bourbons aimed at nothing less than the destruction of their ancient foe. The popular instinct anticipated and divined the great political secret, refused to be hoodwinked by diplomatic subtleties, formed its judgment as to the real meaning of high-handed proceedings by the tone of studied insult and neglect which it observed in foreign Courts,

* See Ranke's "History of England," Oxford Edition, v., pp. 397, 398. This Family Compact of 1733 was the first of a series.

took the matter into its own hands, and never rested till it found at last a Government which understood what was due to the dignity of a great country, and showed itself capable of effectually supporting that position.

On this point, where so many have erred by blindly following authority instead of exercising a little independent criticism, we find, as we might expect, a solid judgment in the pages of the great German historian of England. "The fall of Walpole," says Ranke, "was not the fall of an ordinary Minister, but the fall of the political system based on the first union of the House of Hanover with the Regent of France. It was a return to the policy which had at that time been abandoned—the policy of war against France and the Bourbon interest in Europe; and that at a moment when these had the upper hand both by land and sea." *

It is essential to this survey to observe that the Bourbons, under the crafty guidance of one of the ablest Ministers ever known in Europe, had added to Spain and the Indies, not only Lorraine, but South Italy. The two peninsulas of Italy and Spain, commanding the whole Mediterranean, which it had been the determined policy of Great Britain for so many years to keep in separate hands, were now practically in the same. The Partition Treaties of William, the

* "History of England," Oxford Edition, Vol. v. p. 405.

sanguinary wars of William and Anne, the famous Treaties which ensued upon those wars, had failed at last on this cardinal point. If in the Mediterranean the Eastern Question of to-day is vital for England, how much more was the Western Question of the last century! France, great enough before, was now at last enabled to present a secure front on the German side; the Bourbons, on her throne and on those of satellite kingdoms, were in possession of realms as boundless as those of Charles the Fifth. The Mediterranean was becoming a French lake. Louis Quatorze had never attained such a position. This mighty force was about to be put forth against what the British people fondly believed,—and events have proved that they were not wrong,—to be the last home of freedom, against the country which, as Burke says, William had once taught to regard herself as “the arbitress of Europe, as the tutelary angel of the human race.”*

Nothing more need be said on this part of the subject, suggestive as it is in many directions. The conviction that England was called upon to act with the utmost vigour and resolution, if she would not only develop her industry but save the priceless jewel of her independence, was righteous and wise; but what a melancholy picture does the history of the next few years present! Now was discovered the inherent weakness for foreign policy

* “First Letter on a Regicide Peace,” p. 62.

of the system under which the country had been governed—necessarily, as we have seen, but unfortunately governed—for so many years. The supreme place which had been occupied by Walpole, almost as if by birthright, could be filled by no one else,* for he had kept the reins in his own hands for a whole generation. Pulteney and Carteret, the ablest of men, the Pelhams, by no means the least dexterous, only made themselves conspicuous by their ignominious failure. The open corruption of members of Parliament disclosed its features in a far more hideous form when the process was carried forward by men trained in Walpole's school without having caught the consummate statecraft of their master. But thus only could it have been brought to the bar of public opinion, and finally suppressed.

Further, the extreme jealousy of a standing army entertained by the people, under the memory of the times of James II. and William, had kept the numbers of our troops beneath even the low standard necessary for domestic order, and far below what was required for dealing with a Jacobite rebellion. The Navy, then as ever in English history, the theoretical bulwark of the land, had been so starved and pinched that officers dared not run the necessary risks of battle for fear of losing the ships which there were no funds to replace. The obligation under which the country thus found itself involved to employ foreign troops to do the work which should have been

done by itself, produced still further demoralization. To read at this interval of time the fierce denunciations which rang throughout the land, of the Hanoverian and Hessian levies which fought the English battles and protected English shores, one would have supposed that the people were only too willing to enlist in the service which excited such clamour. We find nothing of the kind. Turbulent and riotous indeed they were, and that to an extent scarcely ever before known; but the soldier-spirit seemed to be lost and gone. Something, no doubt, is to be attributed, in the Rebellion of 1745, to the absence of public interest in the Succession; but it is utterly impossible to ascribe the disgraceful attitude of the country during that period solely to the indifference of the people. It must indeed be admitted that there was nothing in the treatment of the soldiers and sailors which was likely to give much encouragement to men who might have been tempted to fill the ranks.

The officers were little better. Their effeminacy was proverbial: it was a joke. Mrs. Montagu, then Miss Robinson, a most intelligent critic, writing in 1741, playfully says:—

“ How do our scarlet beaux like this scheme of going abroad? Do the pretty creatures who mind no other thing but the ladies and the king, like to leave the drawing-room and the ridotto, for camp and trenches? Should the chance of war bring a slovenly, unhandsome corpse betwixt the wind and their nobility, can they abide it? Dare they behold friends dead and enemies living? I think they will die of a panic and save their enemies, powder.

Well, they are proper gentlemen. Heaven defend the nunneries ! As for the garrisons, they will be safe enough !” *

Another letter of hers, from London, in 1745, affords a painful indication of the rotten state of society :—

“ People of the greatest rank here have been endeavouring to take the utmost advantage of the unhappy state of their country, and have sold the assistance it was their duty to give. Self-interest has taken such firm possession of every breast that not any threatening calamity can banish it in the smallest instance. It is terrible to see people afraid to trust each other on this occasion : everything is turned to a job, and money given for the general good is converted too much to private use.” †

Yet there were numerous indications that the old spirit was not extinct. Only two years after the “scarlet beaux” were aroused by the notes of war, they showed much more of the ancient English valour at the Battle of Dettingen than their enemies liked ; and in the very year when the people at home flinched from a handful of savage Highlanders, their little army abroad astonished the whole world at Fontenoy. When the naval glory of England had sunk so low that even a vapouring admiral like Vernon was a hero, so proud were the people of him, that Mrs. Montagu reports how “all the ladies in Suffolk give place to Mrs. Vernon, even those of the highest rank.” ‡

It could only be by slow degrees that this good material could be applied to its proper use. Many

* Mrs. Montagu’s “Letters,” &c., 1809, vol. i. p. 183.

† Ibid., vol. iii. p. 40.

‡ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 55.

were the miserable failures, the doubtful successes, the painful complications, through which Great Britain was forced to pass before her Imperial star emerged from the floods. Even Pitt failed at first like the rest ; for in the Seven Years' War the conflict had extended to America and India, to Africa and the islands of the Pacific ; it had become a struggle for life or death, and the country was far from being properly prepared for it. Indeed, it seemed at the end of eighteen years, as if the English were about to sink under the weight of a Coalition which they had rashly undertaken to confront. The memories of former greatness drove the iron into their souls. "To a people who have once been proud and great, and great because they were proud, a change in the national spirit is the most terrible of all revolutions."* The depression, almost despair, of the nation in 1757, may be judged by the following extract from a Sermon which is only valuable from its entirely unconscious testimony. It was preached early in 1760, when the clouds had at last disappeared, and the blaze of victory, right overhead, was lightening every countenance :—

"The time is not long since the wisest among you thought that our ruin was near at hand : the anxious inquiries after public news, the despair seen in every countenance on the least miscarriage of our fleets and armies, our distrust of each other and slavish dread of the enemy, were melaucholy symptoms of a nation's fears ; and indeed that fear was far from being groundless. We were deeply engaged in a burdensome and expensive

* Burke's "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," p. 4.

war ; a strange concurrence of accidents had left us the choice of only one ally [Frederick the Great], whom all the world, unacquainted with the resources of his genius, imagined must soon fall an easy prey to his numerous enemies ; every attempt we made for the recovery of our possessions in America, so unjustly torn from us, was shamefully defeated ; our army in Europe returned home from an ill-planned and ill-executed expedition with signal disgrace, and our fleet was inactive from a supposed neglect. Then at home affairs were, if possible, in a still worse condition ; a general dissatisfaction at the Ministry, unhappy quarrels and contentions for power among the great, supplies raised with murmurs, and paid slowly with sullenness ; and, to complete all our unhappiness, the poorer sort of people throughout the whole kingdom were feeling the quick approaches of what may not improperly be called a general famine, raised and continued, as there is but too much reason to believe, by the arts of avaricious wretches, who wanted to make a price of the miseries of their fellow-creatures. . . . The merciful goodness of God has now given us blessings directly opposite to every one of these calamities. . . . I offer to your compassion two public-spirited charities lately set on foot, which seem more particularly adapted to the solemnity of this fast ; I mean the clothing of the unhappy French prisoners, victims to their prince's merciless ambition, and contributing all in our power to the necessities and distresses of our brave countrymen abroad." *

The contrast presented in this sermon must have been indeed striking. Since the *annus mirabilis*, the year 1706, when Marlborough and Eugene, Peterborough and Galway, brought the Bourbons on their knees, no such triumphs had roused the spirits of the British people as distinguished the year 1759. It was, perhaps, the most glorious the country ever

* Sermon by the Rev. John Burrows, B.D., Oxon., afterwards Rector of St. Clement Danes, Christchurch, Southwark, and Hadley, Middlesex. It was probably preached at St. Ann's, Soho, at which church he held about this time the Morning Preachership.

witnessed. Under Pitt's leadership the British flag flew triumphant in every quarter of the globe. Hawke, Wolfe, Boscawen, Amherst, added victory to victory. British and Hanoverian troops at the Battle of Minden saved the failing cause of Frederick the Great. Canada, completely delivered from the French, became a British possession; and with it, as none could doubt, came all North America. A Continent was won for the British race when Wolfe fell in the arms of victory. The conquests of Clive in Bengal had been extended to the Carnatic, and all India lay at his feet. In East and West the rivalry of any and all European nations with the British people was apparently for ever at an end.

SECTION II.

From the position thus attained at the close of the reign of George the Second, Great Britain has never receded; but in spite of occasional, most useful, checks, made further and further advance. In attempting to account for the marvellous change which came over the British Islands, it has been said already that we ought not to be satisfied with referring it to the genius of any one, two, or three men. Perhaps we shall proceed best if, in the search for deeper causes, we begin with recounting the obstacles which had been surmounted.

The first of these obstacles was removed by the Battle of Culloden. It was not till the Jacobite

spirit of the nation, which had paralysed its foreign policy, and necessitated an unpopular, and in itself unworthy, treatment of affairs both in Church and State, had been absolutely crushed, that any better government than Walpole's became at all possible; and even then only by slow degrees. It was easy to treat the "Patriots" with scorn as long as the hard, practical necessity of staving off, or keeping down, a rising in favour of the Pretender, was the one obvious condition of government. And for some years after the Rebellion,—who could say that it was safe to disregard those glowing embers, while occasional elections, even as late as the celebrated Oxfordshire contest in 1754, turned upon a desperate struggle between Whigs and Jacobites, the "New Interest" and the "Old Interest;" and while the Pretender was able to visit London incognito, as he did in 1750, without betrayal? Can we unsparingly condemn the King and Ministers, who were still forced to find safety in bribing Members of Parliament, when even Pitt found himself obliged to wink at the practice, and to leave the dirty work to be done by the well-accustomed hands of Newcastle? At last, however, Jacobitism had disappeared, leaving nothing but a certain vain sentiment behind; and a united English people rallied round their leaders.

Along with a united English people were now marshalled, shoulder to shoulder, their ancient rivals and enemies, the Scotch. No more important effect ensued upon the ruin of the Pretender's cause. The

Union between the two countries, which was the glory of Queen Anne's reign, had done much ; but they were never really united till the Battle of Culloden extinguished the practical independence of the Highlands. Now at last, in mountain and plain alike, the law reigned supreme, and the power of the feudal chiefs was abolished. Now at last these gallant savages were disarmed, and what they felt at first far more, disrobed of their picturesque attire. From this time forth they fairly set out with characteristic energy upon that race of education and civilisation on which their Lowland brethren had already started, and in which the Scotch people have outstripped all competitors. They were soon to find themselves among the foremost ranks of the British forces, when the genius of Chatham called forth their warlike spirit into a legitimate channel, by enlisting them as Highland regiments under Highland officers.

And Ireland was at this same period in a happier condition through the splendid administration of Lord Chesterfield. At a critical moment of British history another obstacle to its progress was at least partially removed by his means. Nor did the effects of his admirable measures, which kept Ireland so quiet during the Rebellion of 1745 that troops quartered there were spared for the English emergency, pass away with his period of office. We cannot but connect it with the subsequent rapid increase in the value of Irish land, and the eagerness with which tenants now sought to obtain leases at

largely increased rates. Thus agriculture began to supply in some degree the void which English jealousy had created in the trade and commerce of the sister island; and when, after some years, this immediate source of prosperity received a check, a compensation was found in the general reclamation of bog and waste lands, and in a course of general improvement to which the troubles of the latter part of the century alone brought a cruel and too-prolonged suspension.

If it is suggested that Chesterfield's administration was too short to produce such results, arguments in favour of the view expressed above will not be wanting to those who consider that he was the first Lord-Lieutenant, since the subjugation of the island by William, to treat the Roman Catholics with thorough confidence, to introduce order and economy into Irish finance, to encourage Irish science, and to seek out and employ merit without reference to interest. Thus, to quote the words of an Address presented to him during the height of the Rebellion in England and Scotland;—"Ireland enjoyed a serenity unknown to the greatest part of Europe;" and we are told that when he left the country "he was attended to the shore by persons of all ranks, denominations, and religions, by the universal acclamations of the people, who praised him, blessed him, and entreated him to return." The success of this unwonted policy was purchased, not by the depression of the Protestants, whose associations for the defence of the island received his earnest encouragement; still less

by the neglect of efficient preparations for soldierly defence, if the wave of Jacobitism should break upon his shore. This mixture of firmness and conciliation produced one happy moment for Ireland;—"Religion became what it ought to be—a bond of union, instead of an instrument of discord; superstition was enlightened, fanaticism disarmed." *

To the general basis of strength afforded by the united action of the three Kingdoms, accomplished for the first time in the course of so many ages, may be added another element—the cessation of the bitter, continuous strife of which the Court of Frederick Prince of Wales had been the centre. That most unamiable member of the whole Royal Family died in 1751, and with him the chief disturbing factor in English politics. The terrible quarrels between him and his parents (not by any means his fault alone) were demoralising and disastrous; their effects spread throughout society. It was indeed by no means wholly undesirable that the political discontents raised by Walpole and his successors, under their narrow, exclusive system, should find, during the abeyance of Party-government, a focus at the Prince's Court. It was only by some such rude substitute that the Constitution could be gradually brought back into working order. It was under this very shelter that Bolingbroke propagated those political ideas which were soon to bear such wholesome fruit. But the indirect usefulness had come to

* Maty's "Chesterfield," Vol. I., pp. 150-168.

an end, and the direct mischief largely predominated. Never has a kind Providence more happily interposed for England than when this prince was removed, and the young boy of twelve left in his place, to imbibe religious and political influences which were to prove in after time of inestimable value to his country.

The obstacles to national development being thus cleared away, what were the positive causes to which we may trace the onward movement? We shall not be far wrong if we assign a high place to the growing confidence of the nation in King George the Second. And here we are on tender ground. So violent has been the feeling propagated by the popular writers of the last fifty years against the earlier Hanoverian Sovereigns that it requires no little courage to say a word in their favour. Even the most moderate recognition of their merits runs a risk of being misunderstood. But there are two Courts of Appeal in this case, which, if not Final Courts, at least deserve respect. We may find a very different estimate from that which now prevails if we turn to the contemporary writers; and we shall be confirmed in our appeal to them by the judgment of the great German historian to whom reference has been already made.

In the present sketch George the First scarcely comes under review, and need only be noticed because he has suffered exactly the same hard fate as his son. It must have appeared strange to many readers that Ranke should dwell with great emphasis on the merits

of this King; but if we can rid ourselves for a moment of the vision of an ogre conjured up for us by his ungainly figure, his ugly mistresses—(it would seem this royal vice might have been pardoned had the ladies only been handsome)—his rapacious German Court, his ignorance of English, and his unfeigned delight when he could turn his steps once more to his beloved Hanover; if we could pass judgment on his immorality with the common fairness required by the consideration that amongst kings, princes, and nobles of that date, including our own, it was all but universal, we should not find it difficult to understand the historical position of George the First. In Ranke's pages we shall perceive that he receives his due meed of praise for having—in spite of that strong inclination to absolute rule which caused his sagacious mother, the Electress Sophia, to doubt his capacity for governing England—taken up at once, and unwaveringly maintained, his proper place as a Constitutional Sovereign. We shall find that, in spite of his affection for Hanover, the profound, enthusiastic devotion of whose people to him must ever be an honourable testimony to his merits, he “never subordinated British politics to his own.” We shall see that he rendered the most essential service to his adopted country by his personal influence over Holland, at that time all-important, and established a more beneficial connection with the Continent than even William the Third. We shall duly note that he, German as he was, entirely represented what even

the more sensible of the Jacobites admitted to be the true English interest, viz., "to keep the Pretender at a distance, and to combat the Powers which supported him." We are little able at this interval of time to measure the value to the British Constitution and the national independence which was represented by the sovereignty of a prince who, as our own excellent historian, Coxe, says, combined a genuine love of peace with well-proved skill and courage in war, and who brought to his elevated post plain manners, simplicity of character, benignity of temper, habits of economy, punctuality, and application to business.* And many a later historian, not so favourably inclined, has admitted that his conduct was upright and honourable, and has remarked on the steadiness of his friendships, and on his habit of forgiving injuries. His merits certainly justified William in selecting him as his eventual successor, though far down on the roll of descent,† and no less did they reward the sagacity of the people who honourably accepted him, foreigner, and therefore distasteful, as he was. A hundred years of foreign masters, observes Lord Stanhope,‡ was the inevitable result of the Civil Wars of the Seventeenth Century—themselves, we may add, the result of the errors of the Stuart Sovereigns.

A very similar mixture of good and bad will be

* Coxe's "Walpole," Vol. I., p. 57.

† At about the period of the Peace of Utrecht he was fifty-eighth on the roll.

‡ "History of England," Vol. I., p. 100.

found in any true view of the character of George the Second. Brought up in the same loose school of morality as his father, with an appearance and manner still more open to ridicule, and with habits of economy which passed for avarice, the best historians yet assign him the praise of courage, honour, and veracity, justice, temperance, and habits of business—a catalogue which at least embraces the cardinal virtues of the heathen: and it has been justly said of him, that he never throughout his reign “once invaded the rights of the nation, or harshly enforced the Prerogative of the Crown.”* It is true, as his Chamberlain, Lord Hervey, states, that “he was often told in Parliament and in print that his crown was the gift of the people, and on conditions, and that if he broke any of them the gift would be resumed.”† But this does not diminish his merit in restraining within due bounds a spirit as vigorous, and a courage as clear as those of any of his most illustrious predecessors.

And while on this point we may observe that it is capable of proof that the present low estimate of George the Second’s character is very much due to the circulation of two contemporary private Memoirs, kept secret for generations, and only brought to light in our own day, when it was not easy, even if the inclination had existed, to balance the impression they produced. Horace Walpole and Lord Hervey were

* Lord Stanhope’s “History of England,” Vol. II., p. 113.

† “Memoirs of the Reign of George II.,” Vol. I., p. 320.

clever and accomplished men, who had access to excellent sources of information, and were indeed, especially the latter, very much behind the scenes. This generation has learnt much from them, but scarcely digested its learning. Sufficient allowance has not been made for the spirit which actuated both of these men in different degrees—the cold, carping, cynical, effeminate, gossiping, character of both writers, themselves no better than those against whom they let fly the shafts of ridicule; people forget, in their delight at finding out that the vices and weaknesses of poor human nature are shared to the full by the greatest people, that no one is a hero in the eyes of his *valet de chambre*. Whose character would stand the test of hostile criticism from those admitted to perfect intimacy, noting down hour by hour all defects, and transmitting them, safely bottled up, to a posterity which had lost all knowledge of the other side of the picture? The old-fashioned reverence for the Crown had its peculiar dangers; but they are scarcely so great as those which arise from the temptation to turn everything into ridicule belonging to those who hold positions of rank and influence.

It has been remarked that little countenance will be found for this low view of the early Sovereigns of the House of Hanover in the Memoirs and writings of contemporaries published at or near those times. It may be sufficient here to quote two of them. Here is Burke's estimate, published only ten years after the death of the old King :

"In times of doubt and danger to his person and family, George the Second maintained the dignity of the crown, connected with the liberty of his people, not only unimpaired, but improved, for the space of thirty-three years. He overcame a dangerous rebellion, abetted by foreign force, and raging in the heart of his kingdoms; and thereby destroyed the seeds of all future rebellions that could arise upon the same principle. He carried the glory, the power, the commerce of England to a height unknown even to this renowned nation in the times of its greatest prosperity; and he left his Succession resting on the true and only foundations of all national and all regal greatness—affection at home, reputation abroad, trust in allies, terror in rival nations. The most ardent lover of his country cannot wish for Great Britain a happier fate than to continue as she was then left."*

If Burke is suspected of giving the rein to his rhetoric, let us hear Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, "the English Dacier," whom even Dr. Johnson admitted to be learned and wise beyond the reach of his criticism, and who uses the following language:—

"The three kings of the Hanoverian line, George the First, Second, and Third, are the three best monarchs that ever sat in succession upon the throne of England."†

It was not, however, during the Administration of Walpole that the people learnt to place confidence in their King, or to feel affection for his person. During the lifetime of their favourite, Queen Caroline, she was regarded as the virtual ruler; and Walpole was himself almost a king. The unpopularity of the policy towards Hanover clouded the relations between the crown and the nation; the military tastes of "the Captain" were looked upon as ludicrous

* "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," Vol. I., p. 20.

† "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 434.

rhodomontade. It was not till George at last found the opportunity, for which he had long panted, to show his brilliant courage at Dettingen—not till he had at last inspired the people with something of his own spirit in suppressing the Rebellion of 1745, that they began to understand that they had a leader who, on one side at least of the British character, worthily represented them. Whatever mistakes he made after this, whatever the complications of government which ensued in the interval between Walpole and Pitt, whatever the disappointments of policy and disasters in arms, one thing remained—the dauntless front shown by the King in the encouraging support he invariably gave to those who exhibited military skill and courage, in the unwavering identification of himself with the nation in the Imperial movement now commenced.

The King's subjects even learnt to be ashamed of the charge of parsimony so long preferred against their sovereign, when, at the close of his reign, they found that he had poured the whole savings of his life, saved for an evil day, two millions and a half of money, into the coffers of his beloved Hanover. Thus only could it be redeemed from what seemed its final absorption within the domains of its many enemies. If he was long in overcoming the hostility which had sprung up between himself and Pitt, the necessary consequence of the complicated, factious struggles of the period, he proved himself nobly capable of trusting and

supporting him when the time of his triumph had at last arrived, and the nation with one voice summoned "the Great Commoner" to the head of affairs.

And the English people themselves, these busy, calculating shopkeepers, these turbulent mobs, these "bleating" gentry, as George Herbert called them at a still earlier date—by what sort of training had they once more convinced the world that they were come of an Imperial stock? Already Goldsmith had sketched them with the pen of genius in the somewhat boastful lines, once well known, now too much forgotten:—

"Stern o'er each bosom Reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great,
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by;
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful hand,
By forms unfashioned, fresh from Nature's hand,
Fierce in their native hardihood of soul,
True to imagined right, above control,
While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
And learns to venerate himself as man."*

It would be easy to show at length that the people were undergoing an education at home and abroad peculiarly suited to produce this result. The merest summary must here suffice. And first on the political side.

By the middle of the century a marked improvement in the political condition of the country may be observed, owing chiefly to the decline of Jacobitism, but very largely also to Boling-

* "The Traveller;" written *circa* 1755; published 1765.

broke's literary activity. Excluded from Parliament, and fortunately thus reduced to serve his country only with his pen, his influence in extending a more wholesome idea of the Constitution than had hitherto been entertained there can be no doubt^{*} was very great. Though impeded by extravagances and personalities, the extraordinary gifts, the penetrating style of that brilliant politician made their way through every obstacle, and lent their colour to the age. Pitt was more the child of Bolingbroke than he himself knew; the revival of government by Party as we now know it, was chiefly the handiwork of the man whose "Patriot King" was to govern irrespective of Party. Contests at elections began to excite a deeper interest as men awoke to a higher sense of duty, and they were based on higher grounds than before. Pitt's magnificent speeches were, year after year, step by step, elevating the moral tone of Parliament and the people. How great an effect he produced when, in 1754, he descended in all his dignity from the gallery of the House, sternly rebuked young Delaval for ridiculing the idea of squeamishness on the subject of bribery, and, amidst the dead silence of the terrified members, thundered forth to the Speaker that the time had come when he must intervene to save the ruined character of Parliament, or "we shall only sit," said he, "to register the arbitrary edicts of one too powerful subject"!*

* Walpole's "Memoirs of the Reign of George II.," Vol. I., p. 354.

What is still more to the present purpose, reports of debates now found their way, irregularly, to the public; and thus the House of Commons began at last to take in some degree its modern place as the representative of the popular will. The Press was making a rapid advance, and the growth of political earnestness taught the people to understand their strength, and to resolve that misgovernment should come to an end. The pertinacity with which they clung to the great man who was educating them to a higher moral tone is almost affecting to contemplate; for the natural balance of the Constitution had long been out of order, and personal trust was the only way of escape. Party-government had been in suspension for half a century; it was yet to require the stern discipline of many years before it could recover a healthy condition. But the men of the future were forming under a freer atmosphere; and it is important to observe that the revival of a regular party of Government and a regular party of Opposition took place under those new Imperial conditions which distinguished the middle and later part of the century from its earlier portion. The treatment of the Colonies began to exercise the political mind of England, and to range on either side opinions which had hitherto found little expression except in relation to domestic matters. Above all, the rapid progress of Indian conquest excited the imagination much as, in the days of Elizabeth, the romantic and

chivalrous aspect of affairs by sea and land enlarged the ideas, and promoted the enterprise, of so many gallant Englishmen. If we cherish the memory of the great Minister, who must indeed ever be the central figure of the century, we must remember also the growing grandeur of the people on whose shoulders he rose to power.

Nor must we omit to notice that other element which was by this time beginning to elevate the popular character, the growing sense of religion. In this respect also a whole generation had disastrously suffered by the disputed Succession to the throne. The Church of England, torn to pieces by political struggles, had been punished, silenced, bribed, controlled with a high hand; the very life was in danger of being crushed out of it; the people, at least in the larger towns, were relapsing into contemptuous indifference, the educated classes into infidelity. Blow upon blow had been struck against the Christian Faith itself. Even as late as 1751, Bishop Butler, in his Primary Charge, laments the "general decay of religion in the nation," and that "the number of those who profess themselves unbelievers increases." Four years earlier, believing it too late to save the Church of England, he had refused the Primacy. But the good Bishop was not himself aware of the enormous effect which, even while he wrote, was being produced by his own immortal work. He in 1736, and Lardner from 1727 to 1743, had been the real instruments in stemming the tide of cultivated scepticism;

they had challenged all comers in a manner previously unknown to English literature; a host of followers were ranging themselves by their side; and the noise of controversy, which the Bishop supposed to be an "increase" of opponents, was but the simulated confidence of a beaten party. When Bolingbroke's philosophical attack on Christianity came out after his death, in 1753, it fell perfectly flat. Hume failed to revive the strength of the party. The battle had been won.

Almost at the very same moment when Butler and Lardner were raising their effective defence, the Methodist movement commenced its extraordinary career. By the middle of the century it had done much to restore religion among the masses; it had exercised a considerable influence on the classes above the lowest; it was beginning to rouse the clergy of the Church to wholesome rivalry. In conjunction with the intellectual movement in defence of the Christian Evidences, which had once more restored them to their proper place in the educated mind of the country, this movement had made it impossible to say of England, as Montesquieu reported after his visit in 1730, that there was no religion in the land.

As a matter of course the morals of the population began to improve with the sense of the Unseen which had been once more recovered. The nation began to regain self-respect. One proof of this improved moral sense may be traced in Lord

Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which put an end to several shocking abuses, amidst the sneers and the hostility of such men as Horace Walpole, who had not marched with the age. Philanthropists, like Oglethorpe, had already attacked the foul treatment of prisoners, and ameliorated the laws with respect to debtors. The worst haunts of vice began to receive attention from the Government. The vile neglect of English soldiers and sailors received some slight mitigation—slight indeed, as yet. More and more we find good men and women starting up in this place and that, with a mission to relieve the dark aspect of English humanity. A growing public opinion opened men's eyes to see that evils which custom had made familiar were no longer tolerable.

And in the literature of the period we may see the reflection of these influences. Poets like Young, philosophers like Dr. Johnson, leaders of literary society like Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Montagu, slowly but surely brought religion into fashion. If the great historical writings of that age betrayed the lingering spirit of an earlier time, they at least, with astonishing effect, set people on reflecting upon the inheritance to which they had succeeded, and played no small part in the education of the higher intellects. The revived taste for Shakespeare and Milton, a marked feature of the time, told the same tale. In a word, civilisation, the fruit of many a good seed, was steadily making its way through all

obstacles; the rich soil of the British nation was at last beginning to bring forth the crop for which the cultivation of so many ages had prepared it. In a righteous cause it was capable of any sacrifice. It was a match for the world in arms.

Perhaps there is no more pleasing evidence of the genuinely high tone of the people than the universal burst of delight which broke forth at the Accession of George the Third, shared by all classes, knowing no bounds; nor was it transitory. The satisfaction of the people at finding themselves at last enabled to indulge their loyalty to the full, without trespassing on their sense of right and wrong, carried them over every error of judgment, every failure in the family of the monarch whom they now considered as their very own, supported him through his bitterest trials, and remains to this day at the bottom of the affection for the Royal Family which the present reign has once more elicited. It was thus that Great Britain has, alone among the nations, retained that intimate union of monarchical and republican institutions which constitutes its peculiar strength; and if the incorporate growth of what only exists in separation elsewhere is an anomaly, and from time to time brings anomalies to light, it is certainly but a small penalty to pay for such an inheritance.

SECTION III.

AND now, if we turn from the King, the closely-united Kingdom, and the training of the people, to the more distinctly operative elements in the Rise of the Empire, we shall find one of the principal, where perhaps we should least expect it, in the little Hanoverian principality, which it has been so much the fashion to despise, and which has only just now finally dropped out of all connection with British fortunes. There was no more persistent outcry for nearly two generations than this against Hanover; and it is no wonder that its echoes have been repeated down to our own times—repeated, perhaps, without much thought. For one obstinate, undeniable, fact confronts even the most casual student of history, characterising this whole period of popular outcry, and forcing us to look at the question from a larger point of view. How was it that Minister after Minister, Government after Government, found themselves obliged to adopt, when in office, the very Hanoverian policy which, when out of office, they had so vehemently denounced? Out of office each one of them, including Pitt himself, and he the most bitterly of all, condemned this connection with Hanover as the curse of the country. The wealth of England was being drained out of it for the benefit of foreigners; she was being constantly dragged into

wars and alliances with which she had no concern ; her true interest was to guard the seas, and extend her commerce, not to mix herself up with petty Continental squabbles. And yet, each one in turn, and Pitt with the most vigour of all, when in office, found himself adopting this very policy, subsidising, fighting, making treaties, mixing up Hanoverian and English politics, just as if he had never said anything to the contrary before ! How was this ?

The usual reply has been that the Hanoverian Sovereigns were incorrigible ; that they exercised with vigour the ancient prerogative of the Crown in the selection of Ministers ; that Parliament was bought, the popular voice feeble ; and that the country felt so strongly the need of those Sovereigns in the face of Jacobite intrigues, that on this one point, the only point on which they never wavered, it was necessary to humour them. Is this sufficient ? Certainly not. It is far from a complete answer.

Without giving the Hanoverian kings credit for much more than a most honourable affection for their own hereditary domain, we cannot but see that the possession of Hanover played so important a part in that foreign policy of Great Britain which led to her Imperial position, that there must have been something cogently pressing on the minds of its statesmen, and also something deep down in the instincts of the people, which

justified the curious inconsistency here noticed. So large a subject cannot, of course, be fully discussed in this sketch; but the following hints may be suggestive.

When the statesmen who, after the Peace of Utrecht, successively came to be responsible for British foreign policy, surveyed the situation from the heights of office, they found that the swellings of the political ocean, after the late tremendous storms, were far from leaving an easy navigation. If the Continent had to be carefully watched for no other reason, the network of Jacobite intrigue spread amongst all the Courts of Europe demanded incessant vigilance, and the co-operation of friendly Powers. But, independently of this, there was no single State which did not believe itself to have been ill-treated at the Peace. This is only what happens after all general pacifications. But the peculiar circumstances attending the Peace of Utrecht, made by the Tories for one set of reasons, and maintained by the Whigs for another, rendered the task of keeping order unusually difficult. The Courts of France and the Empire, Spain and Savoy, Russia and Prussia were each of them striving to recover by art what they had lost by arms, each attempting to overreach the other, whenever any fresh event gave them the opportunity; each occasionally appealed to the sword. This was just what England could not do, at least openly and avowedly. The nation was wearied with its past struggles, and yet the glories

of the old triumphs under Marlborough were fast fading away.

These were the circumstances which made Hanover an excellent centre of diplomatic operations. Like the Hague in William's time, and almost equally important with it, Hanover became the rallying-point for the alliances which checked the further development of Bourbon ambition, and carried with it Holland, which, as an independent State, had collapsed after the wars, as well as some of the petty German States. These central Protestant Powers, with British gold at their back, and such remainder of wholesome dread as England still inspired, held the balance of Europe. That, in spite of this well-chosen stronghold of diplomacy, France and its outposts gained so much under Fleury's auspices, is not so remarkable as that they did not gain more. It was owing to the bull-dog tenacity of the Anglo-Hanoverian kings, to the good sense of English Ministers when they had mounted to responsible posts, and to the forbearance of the people to use any stronger weapons than strong language in the matter, that they were able to profit by an advantage which it cannot be said that they understood they possessed.

It was thus that, as time rolled on, and the attitude of watchful peace was exchanged for European war, Great Britain was able to assume once more her old place as the exponent or representative of Public Law, at the critical moment when Maria Theresa seemed to be crushed under the Coalition of her

greedy neighbours, and the Bourbons judged the time to have arrived when they might once more dispute the position of their ancient rival by land and sea. It was thus, and to far greater effect, when the Seven Years War broke out, that she was enabled not only to pay back in kind the threats of invasion, but to establish her Empire. For it must be remembered that the interval between these two wars was by no means one of peace. It was but an armed truce. The duel was by no means fought out. The struggle in India and the Colonies never ceased. The time had not yet arrived when France and England could hope to pursue their respective paths in honourable rivalry. The alliances of the different branches of the Bourbon family were no idle compliments. Their conduct, both in the wars of the Austrian Succession and in the Seven Years War, was precisely the same as in the time of Louis Quatorze, and, as before, Great Britain was the Power which stood most directly in the way. It was her gold, her diplomacy, her handful of intrepid soldiers, her rising public spirit, which employed the energies of France on her German frontier, while that country was thus crippled for the maritime and colonial struggle in which her interest and honour were so deeply engaged. Thus, almost without knowing it, England was once more developing that consummate strategy which the capacious brain of Queen Elizabeth had devised, once more paralysing her uncompromising foes across the British Channel, while she un-

folded her ever-spreading wings over the habitable globe.

And another operative element in the rise of British greatness was connected with these German politics. As long as the country was content with the humiliating position of having to send for foreign troops whenever it was in danger of an invasion from France, or a rising at home, it remained practically without a militia. As the national self-respect developed, such a state of things became intolerable. A wholesome jealousy of the too-useful foreigners was excited by their arrival, and kept alive by their un-English aspect. At last it overcame the strong national prejudice against the creation of a fresh military force of Englishmen. Among Pitt's innumerable services few are greater than his successful efforts, after many discouragements, to establish the militia on what is substantially its present footing.* It became not only a source of strength to the Government at home and its policy abroad, but also a nursery for the regular soldiers. Henceforward a disposable force could be applied for the defence of Continental allies or of the Colonies, without exposure to disaster at home. It is almost inconceivable how the measure could have been so long delayed. So far the country was now unimpeded in its onward march.

* See Walpole's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 450, for the very interesting sketch of Pitt's first Militia Bill, December, 1755. It was under Pitt's auspices that George Townshend's Bill passed in 1757.

Nor, even in this slight sketch, must the causes be omitted which led to the modern development of the British Navy. Here also, as in considering the Rise of the Empire, we are in the habit of forgetting how very recent a thing is this British naval supremacy. The new position of the one led, no doubt, to the new position of the other; but the steps are not generally observed. The memories of Nelson and his peers eclipse everything else; we may extend our retrospect as far back as Howe and Rodney, and by a convenient process connect these heroes of the last hundred years with Drake and Blake, with Monk and Sandwich, but few remember the dreary space which rolls between. Few are aware how much was owing to one great man, whose life has never yet been written, Lord Hawke, for the emergence of the navy out of the low position to which it had sunk. It is not too much to say that it was that consummate Admiral who gave an entirely new impulse to the Service, and delivered the country from the reign of too prudent or too rash officers, from the disgrace of indecisive battles and disastrous failures.

In using this language it is not to be forgotten that Lord Anson's name stands deservedly high for the reorganisation of the Navy, which his great experience and undaunted courage enabled him to effect. Still less may we underrate the importance of Byng's execution. Iniquitous in itself and damaging to the reputation of every person concerned, not even excepting Pitt, who might have secured attention to his

wishes if he had threatened to resign,—yet, in accordance with Voltaire's jest, it must have had a certain effect in teaching a lesson to naval officers. British admirals must in future destroy the enemy's fleet; and no reasons to the contrary were to be assigned. The subsequent history of the Navy supplies the best comment; the acquittal of Keppel in 1779 (a purely political affair, and in that respect like Byng's condemnation) being the single exceptional evidence of a less lofty spirit in the profession. Yet it was Hawke who gave the great example, the importance of which we cannot overrate. In every action in which he was engaged, and alone responsible, he exhibited the same union of brilliant courage and skilful conduct, till, in 1759, he performed at Quiberon the greatest feat of arms in the annals of the naval service. Nelson, it is true, fought a greater number of battles, and destroyed a much greater number of the enemy's ships, but no action of his was fought on a dangerous lee-shore in a heavy gale of wind; no navy in the world before or since ever won a battle with so high a display of seamanship. It was with reason that George the Second, with his keen eye for military merit, dubbed him "his own Captain," and that in the new reign the administration of the Navy was so largely given over into his hands. He formed a school; he imbued his profession with his own spirit; and to the effects of his breeding, through but a few transmissions, we may safely trace the extraordinary grandeur of the modern naval history of Great Britain. Down to very near

our own times, the toast still lingered on in that gallant Service—"May our officers have the eye of a Hawke, and the heart of a Wolfe."

Our attention has been directed to those circumstances connected with the rise of the Empire which generally receive the least notice in popular histories ; but no sketch of it, even so slight as the present, should exclude the fullest recognition which can be given of the position occupied by the elder Pitt. It is a mere commonplace to speak of him as the central figure amongst the founders of modern British greatness, but his distinction is of a still higher kind. It cannot be too much insisted upon that among the many brave and able men Great Britain has produced, no one else so early grasped, no one else so fully understood, the facts of his day which indicated the Imperial position assigned to this country. His genius foresaw, his genius executed the mission of England ; his genius made the instruments, his genius applied them. If we still glow with pride at the record of the times when every month of the year was signalised by some great victory, still reckoned great ; if we ask with surprise why the previous times had failed to elicit a Clive, a Wolfe, or a Hawke, a Boscawen, an Amherst, or an Albemarle, we cluster those rich memories, that fruitful history, we cannot but cluster them, around the name of Chatham. It was that noble spirit which infused itself into all the rest, and taught his countrymen that it was Britannia's destiny "to rule the waves." Nor, though we remember also his frailties,

his caprice, his arrogance, his theatrical style, need we allow these clouds to rise between us and our admiration of the man whose brightness pierced through them all. They are made too much of by those who cannot appreciate a great man when they have got him.

It has thus been attempted to trace—it must be confessed, in a form too circumscribed for so great a subject—the Rise of the Modern British Empire. But even to have the main facts marshalled before us may be of some use in the formation of correct ideas. The modern phenomena will at least lose none of their significance by our observing the justice of the British cause. The opportune removal of obstacles to national development at a supremely critical period of the national history; the direct action of political, social, and religious forces on the people of Great Britain just when they were most required; and the appearance on the stage at the right moment of the great men who were partly the product of these forces, partly the causes of the remarkable results which have been passed in review, will suggest matter for reflection on the past which may have its value in relation to the future.

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